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(G-15-26)

THE CAPTIVE

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Translated from
LA PRISONNIERE
of
EDOUARD BOURDET

by

Arthur Hornblow, Jr.

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Property of the
CHARLES FROHMAN COMPANY,
Empire Theatre,
New York City.

Aug. 20, 1926.

THE CHARACTERS

M. de MONTCEL

IRENE de MONTCEL (His elder daughter)

ANTOINETTE de MONTCEL (his younger daughter)

JACQUES

MARQUIS d'AIGUINES

COLETTE MARTEL Françoise Meillant

MLLE. MARCHAND, a governess.

JOSEPHINE, a maid.

GEORGES, a man-servant.

TIME: The Present.

PLACE: Paris.

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Act 1: Irene's Bedroom.

Act 11: Jacques' Study. One month later.

Act 111: The same. A year later.

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THE CAPTIVE

ACT I

Act One

Scene: Irene's bedroom. A door at the right leads to a dressing room; another in back gives onto the hall, a third at the left connects with Antoinette's room.

The room is furnished simply but with period pieces of uncommon taste; the bed lies in a recess, there is a small divan, some comfortable chairs and a desk. On the latter stands a telephone.

On the walls hang several photographic copies of paintings of the Italian school. In the far corner stands an artists' easel, faced toward the wall.

At Rise: When the curtain rises the room is empty; then the door at the left half opens and ANTOINETTE looks in.

Antoinette
(Calls)
Irene?
(She enters and proceeds to the door at right)
Irene?
(Looking off)
She's not there.
(MLLE. MARCHAND, Antoinette's governess, enters left)

Mlle. Marchand
I told you she hadn't come in yet. It's only six o'clock... that's much too early for her.

Antoinette
But she told me she'd be back early tonight because of the dinner. She's supposed to help me fix the flowers for the table.

Mlle. Marchand
I wouldn't count on her too much if I were you. Do you want me to help you?

Antoinette
Oh, I'd rather she did. If I do them without her they won't look like anything.

Mlle. Marchand
Very well.

Antoinette
Oh! She does annoy me, always being late like this! What am I to do about my dress?

Mlle. Marchand
What about it?

Antoinette
Well, I must know what dress to put on!

Mlle. Marchand
Surely you don't need your sister to decide that?

Antoinette
Well, you see we're the only two women at dinner tonight and we've got to arrange that our dresses don't clash.

Mlle. Marchand
Ah, yes, that's so.

(JOSEPHINE, a maid, enters at the back, carrying a waist to be put away in the dressing room)

Antoinette
Josephine, has Irene told you what dress she's wearing tonight?

Josephine
No, mademoiselle, she hasn't.

Antoinette
Oh, Lord! Now I don't know what to wear myself!

(JOSEPHINE goes out)

Mlle. Marchand
Wear your yellow dress. It's charming...and it's very becoming.

Antoinette
My yellow dress! Don't be silly!

Mlle. Marchand
Antoinette! A little more respect for your governess, if you please!

Antoinette
I'm sorry, mademoiselle. I respect you, dear, - but when it comes to clothes I must say you don't know what you're talking about!

Mlle. Marchand
Very well. And what have you got against the yellow dress?

Antoinette
It's much too dressy! It's just a little political dinner... papa said the men won't dress. We'll be only eight in all.., a few antiques from the Foreign Office....associates of papa's - and a couple of senators. It'll be a regular wilderness of whiskers!

Mlle. Marchand
Antoinette! If you please!

Antoinette
What's the matter?

Mlle. Marchand
If you're not a bit more careful in your language, you'll never get along in Rome my dear. Please remember that you're to be very nearly an official personage there. The daughter of an ambassador is somebody. Every word of yours will be noticed and criticized, you may be sure.

Antoinette
(Smiling)
Nonsense!

Mlle. Marchand
How many times Have I told you that one doesn't say "Nonsense"? You'll do well unless you're alone with your sister, to think before you speak!

(M. de MONTCEL appears at the back, but does not enter)

Montcel
Is Irene here?

Antoinette
No, papa, she's not in yet.

Montcel
(Half to himself)
Naturally!
(Aloud)
Good evening, mademoiselle. Don't get up.
(To Antoinette)
Please see that I'm told the moment she gets in.

Antoinette
Very well, papa.
(MONTCEL starts to go)
Papa?

Montcel
Yes?

Antoinette
If it's about the dinner that you want to see Irene, you might tell me --

Montcel
No, it's not about the dinner.

Antoinette
Oh, I see.

Montcel
Have her inform me as soon as she comes in, won't you...Even if I have some one with me in the study.

Antoinette
Yes, papa.
(MONTCEL goes)
The storm's ready to break! Well I felt it coming.

Mlle. Marchand
Is there something wrong between Irene and your father?

Antoinette
They haven't said a word to each other for over a week, now. "Good morning" "Good evening". That's all. Oh, it'll be gay in Rome if things go on like this! At least here, papa is away three days out of four. But in Rome -

Mlle Marchand
What's the quarrel about?

Antoinette
Ah! That's a mystery!
(Pause)
Do you remember a few days ago after luncheon....when Irene asked papa if she might speak to him alone...in his study?

Mlle. Marchand
Yes, I remember.

Antoinette
It all began then. I've no idea what they said to each other. I tried to drag it out of Irene but couldn't. She said I shouldn't worry about it and that it would all come out all right. Then she changed the subject...I saw it was no use insisting.

Mlle. Marchand
Do you think it's because your father was vexed with Irene for having refused that young man?

Antoinette
What young man?

Mlle. Marchand
The young man your Aunt introduced here. You know perfectly well.

Antoinette
Oh, good heavens no! That's ancient history...why it was over a month ago. No, no - that's been forgotten. Anyhow that makes the third beau that Irene's refused this year so I suppose papa's beginning to get used to it. No, it's something else.

Mlle. Marchand
Perhaps your father's beginning to notice that Irene leads a rather - a rather odd life for a young unmarried girl.....

Antoinette
Oh hullo! Back to the old subject! It's a long time since you've groused about Irene's behaviour.

Mlle. Marchand
I'm not - grousing, my dear. In the first place it's not my concern...no longer my concern, at any rate, thank heaven. If I were still responsible for her bringing up I might grouse - and for good reason. But fortunately I'm not.

Antoinette
Oh come on, - surely you don't expect that at the age of 25 Irene should lead the same existence I do at 17.

Mlle. Marchand
Why not? The elder Robien girl is 24 and her sister 18. Yet theylead precisely the same lives; they go about only with their mother or their companion.

Antoinette
I hope you're not trying to compare that pill Valentine Robien with Irene!

Mlle. Marchand
They're girls of the same age and same class as you.

Antoinette
You know perfectly well that Irene isn't like those other girls!

Mlle. Marchand
And why not, pray?

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Antoinette
Do you know many girls as brilliant...as cultured...as attractive as Irene?

Mlle. Marchand
What of it?

Antoinette
Well, certainly you can't expect a girl like that to spend her life in a nursery - with a kid sister and a wet nurse! She'd be bored to death!

Mlle. Marchand
I don't know whether she'd be bored to death as you so tactfully put it....but I do know it would be far better for her reputation than spending every minute away from home and alone ....without ever telling anyone where she goes.

Antoinette
What do you mean, "where she goes?" She goes to the studio, to her teacher. She works at her painting.

Mlle. Marchand
Very well.

Antoinette
You don't believe that.

Mlle. Marchand
Yes, I believe it, my dear. I'm sure of it, but nevertheless it's no life for a girl of good family. You can't change my mind as to that. It's not the way to find a good husband.

Antoinette
Oh, when it comes to that you needn't worry about Irene. The day she wants to --

Mlle. Marchand
The day she wants to may be too late. However it's not my affair. It's your father's.

Antoinette
Oh, as for papa's bothering! -
(Pause)
Naturally, he'd prefer to see us both married so as to be rid of us! --- and then he could take all his meals at Mme. de Vallon's. He'd love that!

Mlle. Marchand
Antoinette! You will kindly not speak in that way of your father!

Antoinette
What have I said? It's entirely within papa's rights to

Antoinette
prefer Mme. de Vallon's cook to ours. It seems that she has a superb cook! I really can't conceive how papa will do without that cook in Rome!...Perhaps he'll take herthere - as he did to Brussels. Do you think he will....the cook, I mean?

Mlle. Marchand
Antoinette, will you be still. The subject is not a proper one!

Antoinette
All right! Don't be cross. I'll be still.
(She kisses Mlle. Marchand, laughingly)
Poor mademoiselle!
(The door at the back opens and IRENE enters. ANTOINETTE turns toward her gaily)
Ah, there you are!

Irene
What are you doing here, you two?

Antoinette
Waiting for you. Know what time it is?

Irene
Yes, I'm late. I couldn't find a taxi.

Antoinette
Tell me what dress you're going to wear tonight....

Irene
What dress?

Mlle. Marchand
Antoinette, don't forget your father's message to Irene.

Antoinette
Oh, yes; papa said that you were to notify him the minute you got in.

Irene
Oh!

Antoinette
He said to let him know even if there were people in with him.

Irene
(As though to herself)
Very well.

Antoinette
Shall I tell him?

Irene
Yes -- if you don't mind.

Mlle. Marchand
(To Antoinette)
Well, I'll say good night, my dear. It's after six. I must go home.

Antoinette
Do wait a moment. I'll be right back.
(She runs out)

(IRENE in a thoughtful mood removes her hat and cloak)

Mlle. Marchand
Well, Irene, how are you getting on with your painting? Are you satisfied?

Irene
(Inattentive)
What?. . . Oh! yes, thank you, mademoiselle.

Mlle. Marchand
Are you making any headway?

Irene
(Still seeming to wonder)
Slowly, yes.

Mlle. Marchand
It still interests you very much, does it?

Irene
Oh, yes, it still does.
(There is an awkward moment of silence. A very short time:- to avoid appearance of stage wait - ANTOINETTE returns)

Antoinette
Papa says he'll come in here.

Irene
Verywell.

Mlle. Marchand
Good night, Irene.

Irene
Good night, mademoiselle.
(They shake hands)

Mlle. Marchand
(To Antoinette, kissing her)
Till tomorrow, dear.

Antoinette
(Seeing her to the door)
Till tomorrow. Oh, I've an Italian lesson at two. So will you come at about three?

Mlle. Marchand
At about three....

Antoinette
We can take a walk through the park if it's fine.....
(They go out. ANTOINETTE returns almost at once. To Irene)
You haven't told me what dress you're going to wear?

Irene
I don't know, dear. Whichever you prefer; it doesn't matter to me.

Antoinette
Then wear your lavender, do you mind? I'll wear my rose, - you know, the new one, to try it out.

Irene
All right. Tell me, dear, do you know why father wants to see me?

Antoinette
No. I asked him if it were something about the dinner, but he said no. That's all I can tell you.

Irene
What mood is he in?

Antoinette
A little stern. But that means nothing....he's so often that way.

(MONTCEL appears at the back)

Montcel
Antoinette, would you mind leaving us, my child. I wish to speak with Irene.

Antoinette
Yes, papa.
(She goes into her room)

Montcel
(After a pause)
I shall begin, my dear child, by saying that what we have to discuss is extremely serious. My attitude toward you from now on must depend upon it.
(Pause)
Before making any decision I wanted to give you ample time to

Montcel
think things over. Have you done so?

Irene
Yes, father.

Montcel
Well. Then tell me what conclusion you've reached.

Irene
I have not changed my mind, father.

Montcel
Which means?

Irene
That I ask you to let me stay here when you leave for Rome.

Montcel
So this past week has gone for nothing; you persist in asking me something which you know perfectly well is impossible.

Irene
I persist in asking for it. But I can't see that it's impossible.

Montcel
Very well. You also persist in with-holding the reason for your extraordinary request.

Irene
I've already given it to you, father.

Montcel
You've told me you wished to remain in Paris because of your work, your painting. That's it, isn't it?

Irene
Exactly.

Montcel
Irene - consider well, my child, what I'm asking you. Will you or will you not give me the true reason?

Irene
There is no other.

Montcel
Come, come this is childish. If it were a question of your going to live on a desert island your excuse might take on the semblance of truth. But it's a question of your living in Rome, in the heart of Italy, the very cradle of art. Why, only last year you didn't stop begging me to let you

Montcel
go there, - and once I did I had the devil's own time getting you to come back!
(Pause)
Of course, it's true that it was there that you made the acquaintance of those people - those Aiguines - who since then seem to have become the very centre of your existence.

Irene
What have the Aiguines to do with this?

Montcel
Perhaps it's I who might ask you that. But I'll limit myself to saying that I deplore your constant association with them.

Irene
Why?

Montcel
It is not a fit one for you.

Irene
But what have you got against them?

Montcel
Many things. To begin with, it's not to the Marquis d' Aiguines' credit that he had to leave the diplomatic service at the time of his marriage.

Irene
Because he married a foreigner.

Montcel
An Austrian, I know.

Irene
Well, then....

Montcel
If you don't mind, let's put aside the subject of the Aiguines. Let's return to Rome where as I was saying, you'll be in an excellent position to keep on with your painting.

Irene
When one starts with a certain teacher it's not wise to change. Mine is not in Rome, he is here.

Montcel
Do you work a great deal with your teacher?

Irene
Of course.

Montcel
Every day, I suppose?

Irene
Practically, yes.

Montcel
That's not true.

Irene
What?

Montcel
I've been to see your teacher.

Irene
You've been to see him?

Montcel
Today. I wanted to satisfy myself. I went to ask him if he were pleased with his pupil. I left his studio apprised of the real place that painting occupies in your life.

Irene
What did he tell you?

Montcel
Merely that he had not seen you at his studio for a month.

Irene
I've been making a copy at the Louvre.

Montcel
Really! Well, in that case my child you have cause to be very pleased...for in Rome you'll find galleries where you'll be able to copy some of the most beautiful pictures in the world .

Irene
Why are you so insistent that I come with you to Rome?

Montcel
Because the place of a young unmarried woman is with her family and because until you <u>are</u> married your family is your father... even if at times you appear to forget it.

Irene
If I forget it, father, perhaps it's because you don't always remember it yourself.

Montcel
What do you mean by that?

Irene
Oh, nothing.....

Montcel
Excuse me...I insist that you explain your remark.

Irene
If a daughter's place is with her father why did you never think of having us join you while you were in Brussels?

Montcel
I've already told you it was because of my quarters there.

Irene
Only because of that, I suppose?

Montcel
Which of us two owes explanations to the other? You or I? Let that be enough. You are free to think of me what you wish; it makes no difference. But I am your father and I intend to exact obedience from you....I had thought until now that you were a serious minded girl, well able to conduct herself properly..I have treated you accordingly. I was mistaken. I shall treat you in the future as you deserve. I shall leave for Rome as soon as my successor arrives here, which will be early next month. You and your sister will leave with me.

Irene
(Softly)
No, father.

Montcel
What do you say?

Irene
I shall not leave...I have already told you so.

Montcel
You shall leave! You'll go either willingly or be <u>forced</u> to go!

Irene
As to that...!

Montcel
Take care Irene. You should know me well enough to realize that when I've made up my mind to something it's dangerous to oppose me. I've broken stronger wills than yours in my career.

Irene
And you should know me, father. I'm your daughter, and in that respect we are alike.

Montcel
Enough! I'll not tolerate your threats!

Irene
They are not threats. But I'm 25. I'm no longer a child and you must realize that I wouldn't have come to you the other day as I did if I had not also made up my mind.

Montcel
Made up your mind to what --- remain in Paris?

Irene
Yes.

Montcel
Where do you intend to live?

Irene
Why, here.

Montcel
Oh, no, not here. I'm very sorry, but I've decided to sublet the apartment. It costs a great deal, and I'll have no reason for holding on to it after leaving Paris.

Irene
Oh.

Montcel
That being the case, may I ask where you expect to go?

Irene
Well...to an hotel I suppose.

Montcel
And how will you support yourself? With what money? Not with mine. You'll not have a penny from me.

Irene
But, father...

Montcel
Not a penny, let that be clear. As long as I live...and I might inform you --- at the risk of disappointing you - that the present state of my health gives no cause for alarm.
(Pause)
That offers a new side to the question, eh?

Irene
If you think you can impose your will on me in any such way as that---------

Montcel
If that way fails, there are others.

Irene
What others?

Montcel

I'm going to tell you. Not only you'll never have a penny of mine but so far as I'm concerned you'll no longer exist. I shall never see you again. I realize that's probably the least of your worries. Your affection for me will readily bear that separation. But what may cause you more concern is to learn that I shall never again let you see your sister.

Irene

(Overcome)
Oh!

Montcel

Never.

Irene

You'd do that?

Montcel

Most assuredly.

Irene

It's wicked of you!

Montcel

Wicked or not, my plain duty is to guard her against you. I shall do so, believe me.

Irene

Guard her against me! Do you know what you're saying, father? What would become of the poor child without me? Who'd take care of her? I'm all she has in the world.

Montcel

Really! I don't count, I suppose!

Irene

You --- Oh, but father, ---

Montcel

I what? Come, come, finish your thought. She doesn't love me, is that it? She doesn't love me any more than you do!

Irene

(Quietly)
And you, father...do you love us? Have you ever given us a moment's concern, a moment's bother? I may as well say it, since we're on the subject. What has our childhood been? Not a happy one, father. Always alone with servants. If Toinon hadn't had me and I her there'd have been little enough affection in our lives since mother's death.

Montcel

You're beginning that over again, eh?

Irene

No father,...It's finished...You've done what you wanted to. It is n't for us to attempt to judge you. But, if after having accustomed us to be all in all to each other for fifteen years, you think to separate us, you're mistaken, that's all.

Montcel

If that's the case, tell me, - since you believe yourself so necessary to your sister - how can you consider remaining here while she's in Rome? Eh, - tell me <u>that</u>?

Irene

Why shouldn't she also stay here?

Montcel

With you? In your care? Are you quite mad? You don't really believe that I could trust that child to you. To <u>you</u>! That's superb!

Irene

What do you mean?

Montcel

I mean that your sister is a sweet, innocent girl. I propose that she shall remain so! Now you have it!

Irene

Oh! Father! ---

Montcel

I'm sorry, but I must say what I think, - what your behaviour compels me to think. If I'm wrong you have only to justify yourself.

Irene

There is no need for me to justify myself.

Montcel

God in heaven! If the reason you had for wishing to remain here were the kind that a daughter might tell her father, you'd have let me hear it long ago.

Irene

I have told you it was my painting.

Montcel

(Gazing steadfastly at her)
I had thought you more intelligent than this. As things stand now I'd tell the truth if I were you. It would be better.
(IRENE is silent)
You don't want to?.... Don't you see that your silence is

Montcel
the most damning evidence against you? Do you think that with what I already take for granted and what I may guess it will still be difficult for me to find out the rest?

Irene
What do you take for granted?

Montcel
You'd like to know?

Irene
Yes.

Montcel
I take for granted that since you don't wish to come to Rome there is someone who holds you here. That's what I think! Am I not right? .... Answer me!
(She is silent)
Listen, Irene...I'm determined to throw a full light on this matter, do you understand? By keeping up this silence you will simply force me to take some unpleasant steps which you can still prevent.

Irene
What steps?

Montcel
Never mind! But I promise you I'll get at the truth. I'll insist upon it in a place where I know I can find it and where there'll be no evading it.

Irene
Where?

Montcel
You want me to tell you?

Irene
Yes, I do.

Montcel
From those whom I must suppose are acquainted with the most intimate facts of your life. Your devoted friends the Marquis and Marquise d' Aiguines.

Irene
(Thunderstruck)
You're mad, father.

Montcel
I think not.

Irene
But---whatever gave you the idea--of asking the Aiguines about such a thing?

Montcel
The idea occurred to me after certain things I've observed. What's more, it's an idea that strikes me as a good one.

Irene
What have you observed?

Montcel
I must be allowed to keep that to myself for the present.

Irene
But at least I have the right to know? ---

Montcel
No, you have not!
(Pause)
You seem strangely disturbed that I should take this step.

Irene
I, - not at all! It's a matter of complete indifference to me.

Montcel
Really. Why, then, were you so agitated by my mention of the name Aiguines.

Irene
(Disturbed)
I wasn't agitated.

Montcel
You were!
(Pause)
Besides, it's very simple.
(Regards his watch)
We'll settle this right away.

Irene
What are you going to do?

Montcel
Ask Aiguines to come here and have a talk with me immediately.

Irene
You won't do that, father!

Montcel
You'll see.
(He goes up)

Irene

(Following him)
Even if I tell you that it would be quite useless, that you will learning nothing.

Montcel

Ah, so you're already beginning to admit things! Listen, - listen to me - if within two minutes you have not spoken the name I wish to hear, I shall ask Aiguines for it whether you want me to or not!

Irene

(Dismayed)
Father, I beg you not to do this!

Montcel

Then, tell me. On whose account do you wish to remain in Paris? Will you tell me, - yes or no?

Irene

(In despair)
But, father --

Montcel

(After a moment)
All right, I'm through!
(He reaches the door, back)

Irene

(Imploring)
Father! No, father!

Montcel

Well?

Irene

It's on account --- of Jacques.

Montcel

(Surprised)
Jacques?
(Comes down)
Jacques who? Jacques Virieu?

Irene

Yes.

Montcel

(Still surprised)
It's on account of Jacques that you want to remain in Paris?

Irene

(Nervously)
Well, - yes.

Montcel

Upon my soul!
(Pause)
What's going on between you two?

Irene

Nothing.

Montcel

What do you mean, nothing?

Irene

Nothing serious, I assure you.

Montcel

Would you mind not juggling words with me? I warn you that all you say will be thoroughly verified.

Irene

Of course, father.

Montcel

So I advise you not to try to hide anything from me. Now, answer my question. What is going on between you?

Irene

(With difficulty)
We've been fond of each other for some time and we had thought, --at least, I had thought that I might marry him, - that's all.

Montcel

You're telling me everything?

Irene.

Yes.

Montcel

So you and Jacques want to get married?

Irene

I said that I wanted to, - that is, I'd like to.

Montcel

Andhe?

Irene

I don't know.

Montcel

Do you mean to say he hasn't spoken of his intentions?

Irene

No.

Montcel
Then how do things stand?

Irene
He hasn't spoken yet.

Montcel
And you imagine that he's getting ready to? Eh? Speak! Explain yourself...don't make me squeeze every word out of you.

Irene
I'm not certain of anything.

Montcel
Then, as I understand it, you love him....if he were to propose you'd be inclined to say yes. Is that it?

Irene
(After a pause)
Yes.

Montcel
And it's with this hope in mind that you'd prefer remaining in Paris?

Irene
Yes.

Montcel
Well, for heaven's sake, my dear, why haven't you simply said so instead of keeping up this air of mystery?

Irene
It wasn't my secret alone.

Montcel
Why, it isn't betraying a secret of that kind to tell it to your father. Besides you must have known perfectly well that there's nothing about your idea that displeases me. Jacques's a distant relative of ours on his mother's side...You've known each other since you were children...he goes with the same sort of people we do. He's a fine fellow and I'm very fond of him. His electrical concession in Morocco assures him a good income....There's no possible reason for my opposing your wish.

Irene
I didn't want to tell you about something...which may exist only in my imagination.

Montcel
Why not? Where's the harm?

Irene
Well, it's not exactly pleasant to risk having to confess one's-self mistaken about a thing like that..you must understand.

Montcel
We must learn to pocket our pride at times. Instead of being afraid of me you should have looked upon me as your natural guide and adviser. I realize you can't ask the young man to reveal the state of his feelings; that wouldn't be quite the thing for you to do. But I can do it easily, without your pride being hurt in any way...

Irene
But father, that's impossible!.....

Montcel
It's so far from being impossible, my dar, that I'll prove it by taking it up with Jacques tomorrow.

Irene
You don't really mean to!

Montcel
Don't worry.....I'll leave you out of it. I'll not even refer to our conversation, --

Irene
But, father.....

Montcel
(Going on)
.....I'll merely tell him that for some time past a number of things have led me to believe that you were developing a deep affection for some one. That I have watched you closely and come to understand, without your saying a word, that your feelings concerned him. I'll then say that, as I'm about to leave Paris to be gone for some time, I'd like to know if he has anything to say to me. Just that...

Irene
Father, I beg you to do nothing of the sort....!

Montcel
I'm sorry to oppose your wishes, my dear, but under the circumstances I'm a better judge of what should be done than you. Some day you'll thank me for what I'm about to do....

Irene
I don't want you to do it!

Montcel
Do you prefer going to Rome without knowing what he --?

Irene
I prefer to wait, without rushing matters.

Montcel
Wait for what? For him to make up his mind? Don't forget that I'm leaving in three weeks' time.

Irene
Well, naturally, we can't expect things to develop much in three weeks.

Montcel
Well, then?

Irene
That's exactly why I want to stay behind.

Montcel
Under no conditions!.....Unless, of course, he has proposed formally, and even then....we'll see.

Irene
But you've just said you had faith in him.

Montcel
No. Don't insist. It's quite useless. I shall speak to him, just as I've outlined and --

Irene
Father, please!

Montcel
Don't be afraid. I'll talk with him as man to man in the friendliest possible way. Whatever his sentiments may be he won't be able to take any exception to what is said.

Irene
For the last time father I urge you not to do this!

Montcel
That's enough, my child. My mind is made up and I shan't change it. Let's leave it at that for this evening if you don't mind. It's already half past six and I have to run over to the Foreign Office before dinner.
(He goes toward the door back)
By the by, will you put Dardannes at your right and Couvreur at your left. Dinner's at eight-fifteen.
(He goes out)

(IRENE seems tremendously disturbed as soon as she is alone. She drops into a chair, musing, then suddenly rising, goes to her desk and lifts the telephone receiver)

Irene
(Into the phone)
Elysees 24-51.... Please. Hullo? .. Elysees 24-51? ... May I speak to M. Jacques Virieu? Oh, it's you, Jacques? I didn't recognize your voice.... You knew mine? .... Fine! - Listen, Jacques, is there any way of my seeing you? ... Yes - if you wish....But wouldn't it be possible right away?..... Then you'll come here...Thanks so much. I'll expect you... What?...Oh, I'll tell you, I can't over the telephone...Bye!
(She replaces the receiver, and remains for a thoughtful moment where she is. ANTOINETTE enters at left)

Antoinette
May I come in? I don't want to disturb you.

Irene
Not at all, dear. Ready so soon?

Antoinette
But it's fairly late. And we haven't fixed the flowers yet.

Irene
Oh! please do it without me. I simply won't have the time.

Antoinette
All right. They'll be too awful but what's the difference?

Irene
Of course they won't be! Don't be silly!...Ring for Josephine, dear, do you mind? I must dress.

Antoinette
(After having rung)
Irene?

Irene
What, darling?

Josephine
(Entering at the back)
Did you ring, mademoiselle?

Irene
Yes. Put out my crepe de chine dress, Josephine...in the dressing room; I'm going to dress right away.

Antoinette
But you said you'd wear the mauve dress!

Irene
So I did. My mauve dress, Josephine.

Josephine
Very good, mademoiselle.
(She goes out right)

Irene
You wanted to ask me something?

Antoinette
Oh, yes, I overheard something that papa said while I was in my room... Just a few words but I'm dying to know what they meant.

Irene
You heard something father said?

Antoinette
Yes --- not deliberately --- I really wasn't listening at the keyhole. But for a moment papa spoke so loudly that I couldn't help hearing.

Irene
What did you hear?

Antoinette
He was saying "You shall leave! You'll go either willingly or be forced to go!" Surely it wasn't Rome he was speaking about?

Irene
Yes.

Antoinette
What?....You're not coming to Rome!....Oh, Irene, you can't mean that!

Irene
I'm not sure yet, dear. Don't bother your head about it.

Antoinette
You're not going to let me go there alone with papa?

Irene
I may have to.....

Antoinette
(Heartbroken)
Oh!

Irene
But you'll have a marvellous time in Rome...You've no idea how beautiful it is. You'll meet some delightful people... they'll give you any number of parties. Just think, you'll be the only woman in the embassy....I promise you'll have the time of your life!

Antoinette
Without you?

Irene
(Tenderly)
Yes, dearest, even without me.

Antoinette
How can I -- if you're not there?

Irene
(Holding her close)
My dear!

Antoinette
Oh, well, if you're going to desert me, then what will------

Irene
Desert you! You know perfectly well that's impossible! ----

Antoinette
Well, come with us then -- what would become of me without you?

Irene
(After a pause)
Would you rather stay here with me?

Antoinette
Oh, yes, --- much!

Irene
But wouldn't you be sorry not to go to Rome?

Antoinette
I'd like to have gone if you had gone. But, without you - no - I'd much prefer to remain here.

Irene
Are you sure?

Antoinette
Sure.

Irene
Well, would you like me to try to persuade father to leave you here too? It won't be easy, but if it's worked well he might consent.....

Antoinette
Yes, please do.

Irene
All right, let me try! But you won't say a word to anyone, not even to Mlle. Marchand, will you?

Antoinette
Not a word!

Josephine
(Entering right)
Does Mademoiselle wish to change now?

Irene
Yes, yes, - I'm coming.
(She goes into the dressing room at the right)

Antoinette
(Alone, speaking off)
Oh! Irene! You didn't say a thing about my new frock!

Irene
(Off)
Oh! I'm so sorry!
(ANTOINETTE approaches the half open door)
I think it's a dream, dear.

Antoinette
Don't you think the skirt's kind of long?

Irene
(Still off)
No....I think it's all right that way.

Antoinette
(Raising her skirt a bit)
Look now - isn't that much better?

Irene
M-m-m - perhaps. But it was really all right before.

Antoinette
Oh! You make me sick! Can't you give a poor woman a little friendly advice?

Irene
Well....no, it <u>is</u> a little too short for you. It doesn't look quite proper.

Antoinette
Do you think so? Oh! But I raised it barely two inches.....

Irene
You've got plenty of time ahead in which to show your legs -

Antoinette
Oh, so you think I have, do you? And what if they begin wearing long skirts again next season, then where am I?

Irene
There's something in that!

Antoinette
Well, suppose I raise it one inch....Are you still shocked?

Irene
All right, go ahead...Shorten it one inch!

Antoinette
(To JOSEPHINE who crosses from the dressing room toward the door at back)
You heard, Josephine. One inch.

Josephine
Yes, mademoiselle.

Antoinette
I'll pin it up for you in the morning. It can stay like this for tonight. Who cares about tonight, anyhow? - whiskers!

Irene
(Still off)
Josephine!

Josephine
Yes, mademoiselle?

Irene
(Entering, now gowned, from the dressing room)
M. Jacques Virieu will be calling to see me. As soon as he arrives, show him in here...do you understand?

Josephine
Yes, mademoiselle.
(ANTOINETTE has taken from the desk a bunch of violets which Irene has brought in with her and is absent-mindedly inhaling their oder)

Antoinette
(Pleased)
Jacques coming?
(IRENE sees the violets in Antoinette's hand, takes them, exits a second into the dressing room returning with a vase into which she puts them. She places the vase on the desk. ANTOINETTE watches this, a bit surprised, but abstaining from comment)
I say, Irene --- ?

Irene
What?

Antoinette
Is Jacques coming?

Irene
Yes....I'm expecting him.

Antoinette
What fun!...Dear old thing! I will be glad to see him! But he isn't coming for dinner, is he?

Irene
No. I asked him to come to see me for a minute because..I've something to tellhim....Incidentally,be an angel and leave me alone with him after you've said hullo.

Antoinette
Righto!

Irene
Thank you, darling... You're really a dear! You never ask questions...and you never ask me to explain!

Antoinette
Oh, I just try not to meddle in things that aren't any of my business, that's all.

Irene
Yes, but they're scarce, people who can do that!
(JOSEPHINE opens the door at back and admits JACQUES)
Hullo Jacques!

Jacques
How are you, Irene?
(To Antoinette)
Well, baby sister!

Antoinette
Hullo, Jacques!

Jacques
Lord! What a beauty! I'm bowled over..and to think that I once bounced this on my knee! I wouldn't dare try it now!

Antoinette
Well, I should hope not!

Jacques
(Noticing their costumes, to Irene)
But, see here, you didn't warn me this was a state occasion!

Irene
State occasion?

Jacques
Your gowns...!

Irene
Don't be startled! --- It's because father's having some guests to dinner this evening.

Jacques
Oh, I see.
(Sits)
Well, what's up?

Antoinette
Before you start in, say good-bye to me.

Jacques
Are you leaving us?

Antoinette
I must.

Jacques
Farewell, beauteous one!

Antoinette
When are you staging that tea party for Irene and me?

Jacques
You've only to name your day!

Antoinette
The last time I saw you you promised us a sumpt'ous tea with caviar sandwiches. But that's as far as it ever got.

Jacques
We'll arrange it, I promise!

Antoinette
I'm counting on you, don't forget! I just love caviar!
(She goes out)

Jacques
Well?

Irene
Thanks for having come, Jacques.

Jacques
Please....!
(Pause)
I'm very curious. What's happened?

Irene
First I want you to swear that you'll never repeat a word of what we're going to say to a living soul.....

Jacques
Is it as serious as that?

Irene
Yes....You'll swear it, won't you, Jacques?

Jacques
Why, certainly.

Irene
You've heard that father has just been appointed to the post in Rome?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
He's decided that Irene and I are to go there with him.

Jacques
Naturally.

Irene
It's not so natural. Until now whenever he occupied a foreign post he's left us here. Why does he want to take us to Rome?... I can't help thinking he's been advised to do it.

Jacques
By whom?

Irene
I don't know.....the Foreign Office probably. Things appear to be rather strict in Rome. Perhaps they felt at the Foreign Office that it would look well for him to have his daughters with him...and that it would prevent his taking Mme. de Vallon along as he always has before. I don't think that was liked any too well in Brussels.....

Jacques
Really?

Irene
I can't be certain that's the reason but it seems likely. Besides it doesn't matter. The main point now is that he's decided we're to go with him.
(Pause)
Only I have decided to remain in Paris.

Jacques
Why?

Irene
(After a moment)
....I told him it was because of my painting, - so that I might continue to work here with my teacher.....

Jacques
....And wasn't that true?

Irene
No. Besides, father saw my teacher today who told him I hadn't been at the studio for a month.

Jacques
Ah!

Irene
He realized I had another reason for staying and just now in a very stormy scene which we had he wound up by saying that he was sure my desire not to go was due to someone who held me in Paris. He insisted on knowing who it was.

Jacques
And then?

Irene
He tormented me with questions which I couldn't answer. He threatened me with inquiries which I couldn't let him make. I was half crazy, terrified, when in my distress, a name came to my lips almost despite myself...the name of the only friend I know I can count on, the only being I can confide in....
(Lowering her head)
Yours.

Jacques
Mine?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
You gave him my name?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
Then...your father believes it's on my account that you wish to remain in Paris?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
(After a moment)
Do you realize, Irene, what you've done?

~~Irene~~
~~Yes.~~

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

What can your father imagine?

Irene

(Not looking at him)

He imagines nothing. I let him understand that by leaving me in Paris - that is to say, by not taking me away from where you were - a plan which so far I was alone in forming might become a reality.....

Jacques

What plans?

Irene

That of....our getting married.

Jacques

You led him to believe that?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

Really!

Irene

Yes, I know....I know everything you're thinking. No need to tell me.

Jacques

Don't you believe it would have been better to tell him the truth?

Irene

(Sharply, looking at him)

What truth?

Jacques

I don't know. But whatever it may be it's certainly better than this - this lie.

Irene

(Staring ahead)

If I had told the truth, no one would have understood it.

Jacques

Why?

(She is silent)

Tell me!

Irene

It doesn't matter....

Jacques

Can't you at least tell me the truth?

Irene

...No.

Jacques

Ah?

(Pause)

Well, I confess it's pretty hard for me to understand how you could have disposed of me like this in such a serious matter - without even consulting me!

Irene

Did I have time to consult you? I was harassed, pursued. Every argument I used to avoid it was turned against me.... I saw only one thing - that father had to be reassured about me at any cost...so that he'd look no further. That was my one anxiety.

Jacques

Were you so certain that my name would be enough to reassure him?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

You might haverealized, Irene, that you should have used some other name....any other name.

Irene

What choice did I have? Do you think I have one single friend besides yourself of whom I could ask such a thing?

Jacques

Didn't it occur to you at all that I was perhaps the last one of whom you could ask such a thing?

Irene

I thought you were fond of me.....

Jacques

You didn't remember that I had also loved you.... ?

Irene

Oh, Jacques....that's all in the past.....

Jacques

Are you so sure?

(Pause)

Jacques
Certainly it's not so far in the past that you've already forgotten it? Is it?

Irene
I didn't think about it.....

Jacques
You should have understood that a girl doesn't ask a man to participate in a pretended engagement when he had hoped for the real thing...a man, what more, who hardly a year ago had every reason to believe that his ambition would be realized!

Irene
Please, Jacques! Don't remind me of that misunderstanding... I've regretted it so much, believe me! I don't know what could have let you suppose that I had ever had the idea of - - -

Jacques
Of becoming my wife? Then why didn't you stop me right away the first time I gave you to understand I loved you and that I wanted to marry you?.....

Irene
But....I didn't think you were really serious about it.....

Jacques
Come now! Who jokes about such things? Besides if you had thought I was joking you would have replied in the same vein. Instead of that you asked for time to think things over...with a ring of sincerity in your voice. You had to leave for Florence a month later, and we saw each other every day before you went. I took you to the station the night you left, and on the platform during the last few minutes before the train pulled out, you said with a smile that I can still see that you were going to send me your answer....Well, I'll never believe that the answer you were planning to send was the one that I finally received three weeks later.

Irene
You're mistaken.

Jacques
I don't believe it.

Irene
What - according to you - could have happened to make me change my mind?

Jacques
I don't know. Something occurred in your life there that I know nothing about, that I haven't tried to find out, but

Jacques
that has changed you in many ways. Of course,it's none of my business....but surely I have the right to find it - shall we say unexpected - that you come to me after that, asking me to pose as your fiance! You must admit it's a bit humorous!

Irene
Don't you feel a little sorry for me?

Jacques
Oh, don't think I'm reproaching you. I just find it humorous, that's all.
(Pause)
So you told your father that I wanted to marry you and that -

Irene
I didn't tell him you wanted to marry me. I said merely that I wanted to marry....but that I was unaware of your intentions..

Jacques
And your father believed that this desire came to you- like that - with nothing on my part to encourage it? Come, Irene, your father's fully aware of your pride...he can't help but think I'm on the verge of asking him for your hand.

Irene
I swear that I've said nothing which might let him suppose so.. Anyhow, you'll see that for yourself, he wants to speak to you.

Jacques
He wants to speak to me?

Irene
I did my best to prevent it, but he wouldn't listen. He said he'd see you tomorrow.

Jacques
Ah?

Irene
You'll see by what he says that I haven't "disposed" of you, as you say....In a moment of anguish I turned to you as the one human being who could possibly save me. If you don't want to, there's nothing to compel it. When father questions you, you've only to act as though all this were news to you and surprises you. Say that there's some mistake - that it's a misunderstanding for which you're terribly sorry but which you did nothing to cause -- and so forth and so forth and that will be all. You may rest assured that's the last you'll hear of it.

Jacques
And then, - what will you do?

Irene
That, Jacques ---

Jacques
Yes. That's none of my business, is that it?

Irene
What can it matter to you?

Jacques
(After a moment)
But tell me - before calling on me to help you, didn't it occur to you that I might not be free, that there might be someone else in my life?

Irene
I know that there is some one else in your life.

Jacques
You know it?

Irene
Yes, of course.

Jacques
Well then, since you know it, how could you ask me to do this for you?

Irene
Am I asking you to change your mode of existence in any way?

Jacques
Well, what are you asking me? To pose as your fiance, isn't that it?

Irene
Not at all! It's simply ---

Jacques
Yes, yes, only so far as your father is concerned. I understand perfectly.

Irene
But not even so far as father is concerned. All I ask is that you suggest to him that by taking me away from Paris he might lessen the....the possibility of a marriage between us some day.....that's all.

Jacques
In other words, you want to profit by the confidence your father has in me to hide something behind it....I don't know exactly what, but something...that you can't confess to anyone. It amounts to that, doesn't it?

Irene
I simply need a few days until father leaves. Afterwards--
(A gesture)

Jacques
Well, what afterwards?

Irene
Afterwards, I'll manage somehow. I'll find some way of remaining here...I'll give you back your liberty, I promise you.

Jacques
But why must you remain here at any cost? Mayn't I know?

Irene
I don't wish to leave Paris; that's all I can say.

Jacques
Let's have the truth. You don't want to leave some one who's in Paris. It's that, isn't it? Eh?
(IRENE is silent. A pause)

Jacques
That's what you've come to. You!.....You that I admired so much! You whom I've always thought incapable of anything low or cheap. And here you are mixed up in the cheapest of all things - a <u>lie</u>!

Irene
If I lie, it's because I'm driven to it.

Jacques
By whom?

Irene
By everyone. There's no other course open to me.

Jacques
That course isn't worth much, believe me...It won't lead you far. And, above all, it's unworthy of you, Irene. You're too fine for that!

Irene
No, I'm not too fine for that! You've always cherished illusions about,me, Jacques. How often I've asked you not to place me on a pedestal - don't you remember. - asked you to realize I'm made of the same clay as all the rest. Why have you always persisted in thinking me different from others?

Jacques
Because I loved you,probably.

Irene
Ah! That's not my fault.

Jacques
And then, no, it's not true!....You were different from other women!. Only you've changed...or rather they've changed you --

Irene
(Aggressively)
They? Who?

Jacques
No doubt the people you've been with such a lot this past year. In deserting your old friends for them it doesn't seem to me that you have profited by the change...that's the least that may be said.

Irene
These "people" as you call them...do you know them?

Jacques
Not at all.

Irene
Well, then -
(Pause)
In any case will you do something for me - think what you wish about them but don't talk to me about it, do you mind?

Jacques
Very well! Just as you like. But since they mean so much to you why didn't you turn to one of them for the help you need, rather than to me? It seems to me that would be far more natural, - wouldn't it? Especially, you see, as I'm not exactly the man for this sort of game.

Irene
(Beseeching)
Jacques!

Jacques
You must have some real friends among them - one surely - well, ask him.

Irene
I have only one real friend, - you....At least I thought you were my friend.

Jacques
It's just because I am your friend that I haven't the right to do what you ask.

Irene
Why?

Jacques
Because it's unpleasant, dangerous - and, above all, useless.

Jacques
No good can come of a lie like that. It's doomed in advance.

Irene
If you were really my friend, you'd let yourself be guided by your heart...instead of by the rules of middle class morality.

Jacques
Middle class morality has its good points.

Irene
Yes....especially to those who profit by it!

Jacques
Just what does that mean?

Irene
Were you being prompted by the rules of that morality when last year you tried to make me your mistress? You don't remember that...?

Jacques
Yes, I do.

Irene
Highly moral, that?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
Ah!

Jacques
Yes, because if you had belonged to me, you'd have ended by loving me and being willing to marry me. I'd have overcome your unwillingness to give up your liberty....It would have been a step toward the only normal solution of any girl's life -- marriage.

Irene
Then it was to convert me to marriage that you wanted me to give myself to you?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
Really?
(Pause)
I had thought it was merely because you wanted me.

Jacques
Naturally I wanted you. I wanted you with all my heart. The

Jacques
thought of your body against mine stirred my blood - as it does at this minute, if you must know!

Irene
Jacques!

Jacques
I'm beginning to think I'll never get over my love for you. However, that's neither here nor there, and doesn't interest you... What I want to tell you is that it's always you of whom I think..even before myself, do you hear? Even now. So that you won't doubt it, I'll say this: - swear to me that this affair of yours - about which I don't ask to know anything - will eventually lead to the normal solution I've just referred to, marriage, a marriage worthy of you.....just swear that and I'll do anything you want me to do. Can you swear it.....?

Irene
(Turning away)
.....I won't swear to anything....

Jacques
Very well. Then, I refuse. Think what you like....that I'm heartless, that I don't love you -- I don't care. I refuse. And if my refusal makes you give up this affair a bit sooner than you expected, it will be better all around, you may be sure.

Irene
You ought to know me well enough, Jacques, to realize that I'll do what I've decided to do,...even if doing so requires laying everything bare to the world - I'll -

Jacques
Have you gone crazy?

Irene
No! But I will if I'm forced to leave....

Jacques
So it's come to that....?
(IRENE lowers her head, repressing her feeling)
My poor Irene!

(ANTOINETTE enters, at back)

Antoinette
Jacques, papa says not to go -- he wants to speak to you.

Irene
How did he know Jacques was here?

Antoinette
Why, I told him. He just got back. He took one look at the table and said, it looked like nothing at all! He told me to fetch you and I said you were with Jacques. Shouldn't I have said that?

Irene
(Embarrassed)
That's all right, dear.

Antoinette
So he sent me to ask Jacques to wait because he wanted to see him, that's all....Did I put my foot in it....?

Jacques
No, Antoinette, it doesn't matter.

Antoinette
Well, I couldn't know! You should have warned me.
(She goes out)
(IRENE stands rigid for a moment, then suddenly making up her mind, she hurries into the dressing room emerging with a cloak which she throws about her as she heads for the door, back)

Jacques
(Dazed)
What are you doing?.....You're going out?

Irene
I'm leaving here.

Jacques
Where are you going?

Irene
That's my business.....I'm going, that's all.

Jacques
(Barring the way)
You're out of your mind!

Irene
Let me pass!

Jacques
But why do you want to leave?

Irene
It'll put an end to all this.

Jacques
You're not in your right senses now!

Irene

Let me pass!

Jacques

What shall I say to your father?

Irene

Whatever you wish, I don't care...Let me pass!

Jacques

No!

Irene

You've no right to stop me from doing what I want.

Jacques

I've a right to stop your doing something rash!

Irene

I've had enough! Enough! I'm 25, free to do as I like without accounting to anyone. Let me pass! Jacques!

Jacques

Irene, come, calm yourself, I beg of you!

Irene

Do you realize what my life will be here after father has spoken to you? No! No! I'll not be questioned any more! I can't stand this being baited by the whole world! I want to go away!

Jacques

Irene!

Irene

After all, what difference does it make to you whether I do go?

Jacques

What difference does it make to me?

Irene

Yes, - is it any business of yours?

Jacques

(After a pause, leaving her)

You're quite right. Very well, go.

(He comes forward and sits, his head in his hands. IRENE, without moving, follows him with her eyes)

Jacques

Well, why don't you go? What's keeping you from going to him, now?

Jacques

(A wan smile crosses Irene's face. She wraps her cloak around her and reaches the door which she is about to open. He sits up)

Irene!

Irene

(Turning back)

Yes?

Jacques

(After a pause; curtly)

Stay here!

Irene

What?

Jacques

Stay here, I say.

Irene

I don't understand.

Jacques

Yes, you do, you understand perfectly....Take off your wrap. If your father sees it, he's the one who won't understand.

Irene

But explain what you --

Jacques

Do as I say.

(MONTCEL appears in the entrance)

(IRENE, hidden by the door lets her cloak slip off. MONTCEL crosses to Jacques)

Montcel

Good evening, Jacques.

Jacques

Good evening, uncle.

Montcel

I hope you didn't mind waiting.

Jacques

Not at all.

Montcel

I was going to drop you a line asking you to come in to see me tomorrow, but when I heard you were here with Irene I thought I'd save you the trouble....I wanted to have a chat with you. Shall we go along to my study?

Montcel

(JACQUES assents)
I won't keep you long.
(Opening the door)
Go ahead, I'll join you.
(JACQUES goes out. MONTCEL quickly crosses to Irene)
You've already spoken to him, haven't you?

Irene

What do you mean?

Montcel

Well, if he knows - tell me. It will save beating about the bush.

Irene

(After a moment)
Yes.

Montcel

Well?.....What's his answer?

Irene

He'll tell you himself.

Montcel

Good.
(He goes. IRENE drops onto a chair near the desk and remains there, thoughtful, brooding, her face woeful. After a moment, her eyes light on the vase which contains the violets; she lifts it to her, looks at the flowers. Then, as if an idea had taken her, she regards her watch, half hesitates and reaches for the telephone. She lifts the receiver as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

THE CAPTIVE

ACT II

August 20th, 1926.

ACT TWO

A study in Jacques' apartment. It has a bookish, comfortable appearance. There are doors left, right and back. A large desk stands centre. A few good sized chairs are placed about.

At the rise JACQUES is discovered seated, musing deeply, his eyes staring ahead. On his lap he has an open snap-shot album neglected for the moment.

A door bell sounds, JACQUES scowls, regards his watch and rising, murmurs, "Oh, well!"

(GEORGES, his man, enters)

Georges
Are you at home, monsieur?

Jacques
I'm expecting Mme. Martel. It's probably she.

Georges
Yes, monsieur.
(He goes, JACQUES places the album in a drawer. GEORGES returns)

Georges
It's not Mme. Martel, monsieur; It's Mlle. de Montcel.

Jacques
(Surprised)
Mlle. de Montcel?

Georges
Yes, monsieur.

Jacques
(Nervously)
Have you whown her into the salon?

Georges
Yes, monsieur.

Jacques
Very well.
(He goes toward door right)
Oh! When Mme. Martel comes tell her ---

Jacques
-----tell her that I telephoned I'd be a bit late. Say that I hope she'll forgive me and ask if she'd mind coming back at four, if that's convenient. -- M-m-m - at four.

Georges
Very good , monsieur.
(He goes out, back. JACQUES opens door right)

Jacques
Do come in --
(Surprised)
Why it's --- ? Well! My man said it was Mlle. de Montcel so I thought---- --

Antoinette
(Entering)
That it was Irene?

Jacques
Yes.

Antoinette
Oh, I'm so sorry, Jacques.

Jacques
But not at all, - why?

Antoinette
Because you must be horribly disappointed!

Jacques
Not at all, my dear. I'm delighted to see you. A bit surprised, but delighted.

Antoinette
You're surprised because you think that a girl of my age shouldn't come alone to a man's apartment, is that it? But I didn't come alone. Mlle. Marchand is waiting downstairs in the car.

Jacques
You've no need to explain. Sit down!

Antoinette
I've just one thing to tell you.

Jacques
Sit down anyway.

Antoinette
(Sitting)
At first I thought I'd telephone you this morning to ask when

Antoinette
I could come, but the telephone's in Irene's room and I didn't want her to hear.

Jacques
Ah?

Antoinette
No.
(Pause)
So instead I came early to have a better chance of finding you in.....
(She hesitates)
Perhaps you're going to think that what I'm doing is a bit ridiculous and even uncalled for---but I don't care. It's just this, - I've come to tell you that Irene is very unhappy.

Jacques
Irene?

Antoinette
Yes....and you can believe me...I'm saying this only because I'm sure of it. For sometime now she's been acting in a very strange, nervous way. Several times it seemed to me that her eyes were rather red. Mlle. Marchand had also noticed it. Finally the other day I walked by chance into her room to telephone, thinking she'd gone out. Well, although she tried to keep her face turned away, I saw she was crying.

Jacques
Ah?

Antoinette
For Irene to cry means that something's up. It doesn't happen often. And as for me, to see her wretched is something I can't bear. Anything rather than that. So I thought it over and decided you didn't know about it and that you should. That's why I've come. So, Jacques - that's all.
(A pause, while JACQUES ponders)
Are you annoyed with me for telling you this?

Jacques
I'm not annoyed with you at all, Toinon, my dear, --- only I must confess that I don't quite understand why you thought you ought to tell me about it.

Antoinette
What?

Jacques
I'm very fond of Irene but I don't see that I ----

Antoinette
(Smiling)
Jacques---papa told me before he left.

Jacques
(Surprised and rather annoyed)
What did he tell you?

Antoinette
Oh, don't worry! He swore me to secrecy----and you may be sure I'll never tell a soul. Besides, I quite realize that nothing's decided, that you both want to think things over, and that you don't feel free to commit yourself definitely just now because of your business troubles....I know all that---
(JACQUES walks up and down, disturbed and wretched)
....Are you cross that papa told me?

Jacques
No, no, it doesn't matter.

Antoinette
You see, it would have been difficult for him not to say something. It had been all arranged that we were to go to Rome with him. Then suddenly plans are changed; we're to remain here, - with Mlle. Marchand living at the house as chaperone. So papa probably felt obliged to give me some explanation. He didn't realize that I had already guessed everything.

Jacques
What had you guessed?

Antoinette
Everything! Not that it was so brilliant of me! I knew that Irene wanted to stay in Paris and that papa wouldn't hear of it. Then on top of that, you come to see Irene, you have a talk with papa, and the same evening he announces to Irene that she may remain and that he'll leave me with her so that she won't be alone. I didn't have to be so awfully bright to understand what all that meant. And you know, Jacques, I was so happy when I did understand. I can't begin to tell you how happy!

Jacques
Really?

Antoinette
I'm positive you're just made for one another! Don't you think so too?

Jacques
Of course, my dear.

Antoinette
Then you understand now why I came?

Jacques
I understand.

Antoinette
Was I wrong in coming?

Jacques
No.

Antoinette
Andit's true that you had noticed nothing, isn't it?

Jacques
Nothing.

Antoinette
I was sure of it! I said to Mlle. Marchand: "If Jacques asked papa to leave Irene in Paris, it's because he loves her, and if he loves her he can't want her to be miserable... or else he hasn't noticed it. Besides that wouldn't be surprising. Irene has so much pride that she's quite capable of not even letting him see that she was unhappy. Naturally if no one does anything it all might go on forever! And it must not go on."
(She takes his hand)
Must it, Jacques?

Jacques
No, it mustn't, Toinon dear. Only, don't you see ---

Antoinette
No, don't tell me. I don't want to know anything. It's none of my business. I've told you what I wanted to say. The rest is your affair. I ask just one thing---that you never let Irene know I came here, because she'd never forgive me for it. Promise?

Jacques
I promise.

Antoinette
Thank you.
(She rises)

Jacques
Wait, please don't go yet, do you mind?
(He walks about, thinking, then stops in front of her)
Do you trust me, Toinon?

Antoinette
(Surprised and a bit worried)
Why Jacques, of course!

Jacques
Enough to believe me without asking for explanations - even if I say things that may seem surprising or incredible to you?

Antoinette
(Still anxious)
Yes, what is it?

Jacques
Listen. You think - and it's natural enough you should - that I could prevent Irene's being unhappy if I wanted to, don't you?

Antoinette
Yes.

Jacques
Well, you're mistaken.

Antoinette
What?

Jacques
I can do nothing for her...or so little.....

Antoinette
You?

Jacques
I.

Antoinette
Then it's not because of you that she's unhappy?

Jacques
No.

Antoinette
(Astonished)
No?.....

Jacques
If it were because of me, believe me she'd not be unhappy long. Now listen to me. At least I can try to do something for her. It may accomplish nothing but it must be attempted. Only for that I'll need you.

Antoinette
Me?

Jacques
Yes. I need some information that you alone can give me. If I knew of anyone else to turn to, I would, but there is no

Jacques
one. If you think my questions are indiscreet or if you believe they are prompted by anything but my desire to see Irene happy, don't answer them.

Antoinette
What do you want to know?

Jacques
I'd like to know something about the life she leads, the people she sees.

Antoinette
The people she sees? But you, mostly.

Jacques
Me?

Antoinette
Yes.

Jacques
When does she see me?

Antoinette
Well----I don't know. Don't you always have tea together?

Jacques
Did she tell you that?

Antoinette
(Disturbed)
I had understood that...I might have been mistaken.

Jacques
(After a pause)
And besides myself, whom does she see?

Antoinette
Well, you know, she doesn't tell me a great deal about what she does.

Jacques
Well, when she goes out, for instance, doesn't she ever tell you where she is going?

Antoinette
She goes to the studio every day after lunch.

Jacques
Ah, yes....And at night, does she ever go out?

Antoinette
At night? Oh, almost never. She's been once or twice to the theatre or a concert, but that's all.

Alone? Jacques

Antoinette
No, with the Marquis and Marquise d'Aiguines.

Jacques
(After a pause)
She met them in Italy, didn't she?

Antoinette
Yes, in Florence, last year.

Jacques
Do <u>you</u> ever see them?

Antoinette
I? Never!

Jacques
Why?

Antoinette
I don't know them.

Jacques
How is it you've never met them if Irene is so intimate with them?

Antoinette
That's no reason. She never suggestedmy meeting them and I never asked to.

Jacques
Why? Don't you like them?

Antoinette
But I don't know them.

Jacques
Does she ever speak to you about them?

Antoinette
No, never.

Jacques
And have you never had curiosity enough to ask her questions about them?

Antoinette
I never ask Irene questions. When she speaks to me first about someone or something -- all well and good. But when she doesn't, she doesn't, that's all!

Jacques
So you don't know anything about the Aiguines?

Antoinette
Very little. I know that she is Polish or Austrian, I don't remember which.

Jacques
Austrian, yes. But you know nothing about him?

Antoinette
Nothing.

Jacques
You don't know what he does, whether he has any business?

Antoinette
I've no idea.

Jacques
You don't know either -- what he's like?

Antoinette
His looks?

Jacques
Yes.

Antoinette
He's tall, clean shaven, - rather smart.

Jacques
Then you've seen him?

Antoinette
Yes.

Jacques
Where have you seen him?

Antoinette
At the front door one evening when he had brought Irene home. I happened to be going in at the same time and saw him. Why?

Jacques
I went to school with a chap by the name of Aiguines. I was wondering if it were the same.

Antoinette
Oh, I don't think so. He's quite a bit older than you.

Jacques
Ah?....Perhaps he's a cousin, then.....There are several branches of the family.....
(Pause)
Is that the only time you ever met him?

Antoinette
Yes. I heard his voice on the telephone one day when he called up and Irene was out. That's all.

Jacques
Does he ever come to see her?

Antoinette
At home? No, never-----

Jacques
You don't know where they live?

Antoinette
Avenue Victor Hugo, but I've forgotten the number. They're in the telephone book.

Jacques
Good.

Antoinette
The Aiguines interest you as much as that?

Jacques
Oh! They interest me....because they're friends of Irene's, that's all.
(Pause)

Antoinette
Is that all you wanted to ask me?

Jacques
Yes, my dear, thank you. You haven't told much I didn't already know, as a matter of fact. But our talk has by no means been without value.
(Pause)
Oh!-----it's understood that Irene must never know about it.

Antoinette
I promise you that.

Jacques
I know I can trust you.

Antoinette
(Hesitatingly)
Jacques, before I go -- I should like to -- to ask you a question.

Jacques
Why, certainly.

Antoinette
Can't you tell me what you're going to do to try and help Irene?

Jacques
No, Toinon. Besides my plan has such slight chance of success.....

Antoinette
Yes, but you wouldn't attempt it, would you, if you didn't think it might succeed?

Jacques
Let's say the chances are about one in ten, if you like.

Antoinette
Well if it does succeed would it---would it mean that you'd get married? Tell me.....?

Jacques
No.

Antoinette
Ah!
(Pause)
And yet you love her?

Jacques
(Smiling sadly)
Do you believe so?

Antoinette
Oh, come! I've known it for ever so long. You've been in love with her ever since the summer you spent at Montcel.

Jacques
But that's not enough, you see.

Antoinette
You mean that she doesn't love you?

Jacques
Yes, just that.

Antoinette
Are you sure?

Jacques
Absolutely.

Antoinette
...What a pity!

Jacques
Do you think so?

Antoinette
(Nods in affirmative, then gives him her hand)
Goodbye, Jacques.

Jacques
Goodbye, dear child.
(She looks at him sadly, still holding his hand, then with a sudden, tender movement, kisses him on both cheeks and exits. He exits with her, enters again a few seconds later, sits at his desk and ponders. Picks up telephone receiver in hand)
Passy 83-42----Hello, is this the Marquis d'Aiguines' house?---Is the Marquis at home?.....Oh!----well can you tell me where his office is?....Where?-----
(He writes on pad)
Thank you very much. Do you happen to know until what time he'll be there?-----Thank you.
(Hangs up receiver, rises, walks about a bit, then sits at desk again, takes writing paper and begins to write. After writing a few lines, rereads what he's written, looks irritated, crumples it up and takes a fresh sheet. When he has finished, he rings, puts letter in envelope, addresses it)

(GEORGES enters)

Georges
Did you ring monsieur?

Jacques
Yes. Jump into a taxi and take this letter to this address. It's a bank. If they tell you that the gentleman is in, deliver the letter and wait for an answer.
(A bell is heard)
If he's not in, bring me back the letter and ask if there is a chance of finding him there tomorrow morning. You needn't leave my name---it's not necessary.

Georges
Yes, monsieur.

Jacques
Have you quite understood?

Georges
Yes, monsieur.

Jacques
See who is at the door.

Georges
(Going toward exit)
If it is Mme. Martel, monsieur, what shall I say?
(Bell rings again with insistence)

Jacques
It is Mme. Martel -- show her in.
(GEORGES goes out, enters a moment later with COLETTE, then leaves)

Colette
Well, I thought you were going to leave me planted on the doorstep. You must tell Georges to open the door more quickly. One always runs into people on stairways.

Jacques
I love your plural!

Colette
What?

Jacques
Nothing. It's not Georges' fault, it's mine. I was giving him an order.

Colette
So much the worse!
(She goes to him)
Hullo, dear!

Jacques
Hullo, Colette.

Colette
Well! After all.....?

Jacques
But you don't give me a chance to open my mouth.
(They exchange a light kiss)

Colette
You're not in a very pleasant mood today.

Jacques
I? Of course, I am.

Colette
Why didn't you come to the Van Garten's last night?

Jacques
I couldn't get there.

Colette
I waited until twelve thirty for you to come, and I had a beastly headache. At least you might have let me know.

Jacques
But I told you it wasn't likely I'd be there.

Colette
I know. But I'd begged you so hard to try, and told you how nice it would be if you called for me, that I thought surely you'd make a special effort. Apparently the day is past for me to ask that kind of thing.

Jacques
I'm so sorry, Colette.

Colette
What were you doing that was so entertaining?---if I'm not being indiscreet?

Jacques
I was dining at my brother's house and it was very late when I left.

Colette
Couldn't you tell him that you were due at a party?

Jacques
He'd just returned to town. I hadn't seen him for two months.

Colette
Evidently that was more amusing than coming to fetch me.

Jacques
Frankly, what fun would there have been in that? You know I hate that kind of party and ---

Colette
You hate everything I like.

Jacques
No, I don't, Colette.

Colette
You do. It's always like that --- I'm beginning to get used to it.
(Pause)
Only it's possible you made amistake in not coming last night-----

Jacques
Really?

Colette
Oh, I say that, but really everything is of so little interest to you now------

Jacques
What is of so little interest to me?

Colette
Well, for instance, that some one should have paid me -- very interested attention.

Jacques
Someone paid you very interested attention?

Colette
Yes--------
(Pause)
Good heavens, you know well enough that when a woman has been seen frequently with the same man, then suddenly is noticed arriving and leaving parties alone, other men begin to take a new interest in her. And besides last night I had on a very becoming gown---

Jacques
Which one?

Colette
You haven't seen it. I had hesitated before ordering it because of you----imagine that! --- I thought you might find it rather decollete. But I'm glad I took it now. It was quite a sensation.

Jacques
I'm so glad.

Colette
I knew it was a triumph as soon as I arrived --- from the way the women looked at it!

Jacques
Not by the way the men looked at it?

Colette
Yes, but a bit later. Women notice that sort of thing more quickly.

Jacques
Ah?

Colette
Then, too, I think that I was in great formlast night.

Jacques
In spite of the headache?

Colette
In spite of the headache. At least so I was told any number of times.

Jacques
Really?

Colette
Any number of times.

Jacques
By whom, for instance?

Colette
What do you care?

Jacques
I'm very interested. You don't doubt that, I hope?

Colette
Well, let me see....Several of the men who were there..among others your friend Moreuil, by the way, who didn't leave my side all evening.

Jacques
No! I thought he was in America?

Colette
He's come back---come back, what's more, an amorous devil. He insisted on seeing me to my door and he was on the verge of insisting he was coming up with me.

Jacques
Not really?

Colette
I think in fact - between ourselves -- that he <u>did</u> suggest it.

Jacques
(Smiling indifferently)
Good old Moreuil.

(COLETTE is piqued and gives him a glowering look)

Jacques
And so, you were saying that he----

Colette
Oh! Please! That's enough, isn't it? Let's speak about something else!

Jacques
As you say.

Colette
...Listen Jacques. When I came I'd no idea of making a scene. But it really begins to look as if you were trying to exasperate me! I've stood for a great deal for some time, but this is too much!

Jacques
All right, let's have it!

Colette
I understand well enough that you don't love me any more; that's quite within your rights. But that being the case, why not say it? We've never sworn eternal fidelity, have we? Be frank about it for once, -- it would be so much better.

Jacques
But nothing is changed, Colette.

Colette
Ah, you think not, do you?....Well, let me tell you that if you had never shown more ardor than you have today I never would have been to you what I have. Ah!...no!.....I realize now that I gave in much too soon. You'd have loved me more if I had made you want me longer. I liked you and let you see that I did; so much the worse for me. But, at least in the beginning, I could entertain some illusions about our love! But <u>now</u> - !

Jacques
I give you my word, Colette, that my feelingsfor you have not changed in the least.

Colette
What does that mean?

Jacques
Well, that ----

Colette
That you have never loved me, is that it?

Jacques
I didn't say that.

Colette
But it's what you're thinking. Well, at least you're being

Colette
frank about it, thank heaven! At last! --- But if you never loved me why did you ask me to become - to become your - your -

Jacques
(Breaking in quietly)
I might reply that I never asked you to.

Colette
You never asked me?

Jacques
No, Colette.....

Colette
So! Well, then Il.....

Jacques
But don't you remember-------

Colette
Then I suppose it was I who begged you to become my lover?

Jacques
No---------

Colette
Well one of us must have done it---If not you---than it must be I!

Jacques
Listen, Colette, let's speak about something else.

Colette
No! Not until you've explained what you meant.

Jacques
Let's pretend that I didn't say anything.

Colette
No, no, no. You can't get out of it like that. It would be too easy to insult a person, and then----

Jacques
How have I insulted you?

Colette
Well if you don't think it insulting to tell a woman who has been your mistress for six months that you never asked her to be, then just what is it?

Jacques
In that case I offer all kinds of apologies. I simply yielded for the moment to the desire of relating what happened between us. I was wrong. Do forgive me.

Colette
Relating what happened between us? You're going back to that?

Jacques
My dear, try to recall the first talk we had!

Colette
Our first talk?

Jacques
One of the first, if you prefer. It was at Versailles, by the lake. You had telephoned me in the morning to ask if I cared to motor out and get a breath of country air. We left your car at the entrance of the grounds--if you remember---

Colette
I remember, yes.

Jacques
Suddenly you said: "The biggest mistake that women make is to select the same man for conversation making and for love making." I thought that was an amusing idea and I replied, "One can hardly expect to be at the head of one's class in both rhetoric and gymnastics!" You agreed with me and were charming enough to add that I must be at the foot of my class in rhetoric. Finally, you said you saw no reason why two people who were physically attracted to each other should not base an intimacy between them on a platform of gestures -- it being thoroughly understood that there would be no trespassing on the domain of sentiment. That idea delighted me, - and as it was time for tea I suggested that we return to town and have it at my apartment....which you were good enough to accept....That is exactly how it all happened.

Collette
And what has that to do with it?

Jacques
I've always thought that that day we settled the exact understanding between us.

Colette
(Shrugging her shoulders)
As if one meant seriously everything said at such times.

Jacques
I meant what I said. I undertook only a relation I could abide by. If I had undertaken any other it would have been very unfair to you.

Colette
You're being that now, my dear. Do you think that falling in

Colette
love with me was beneath you?

Jacques
It's not a question of that!.....

Colette
Strange as it may seem to you, there are many men who feel differently about it.

Jacques
But I'm well aware of that, Colette! You're a very attractive woman and I know perfectly that there are many men who would like to be in my place. I'm sorry I can't make myself more clear. I only meant to say that at the time of our meeting, I could make no other promises--than those I made, ----that's all.

Colette
Because you were in love with someone else, no doubt...And you still love her, is that it? Say it! Why don't you say it?

Jacques
That, Colette, belongs in the domain of sentiment. I have never trespassed on yours, you must admit. Keep off mine.

Colette
Who is it?

Jacques
Please.

Colette
You won't tell me?

Jacques
There's nothing to tell.

Colette
Oh! I'll find out,.....it can't be very difficult...Do I know her?

Jacques
I assure you, Colette, that you're wasting your time.

Colette
(Searching)
Let's see; a woman that you were already in love with six months ago and who does not love you ----

Jacques
How do you know that she doesn't love me?

Colette
That's evident. Else why should you have turned elsewhere for distraction. That's really all I've been to you --- a distraction!

Jacques
You're mistaken, Colette.

Colette
You're very kind, but don't bother to protest further..Wait a minute..... I know who she is.

Jacques
Ah?

Colette
The Barentier girl?

Jacques
Now you have it!

Colette
It's not she?

Jacques
Yes, yes, let's say it is!

Colette
Great Heavens! You're annoying!

Jacques
Colette, please, let's change the subject.
(GEORGES enters. JACQUES rises on seeing him. To Colette)
Pardon me.....
(To Georges)
Well?

Georges
I delivered the letter.

Jacques
Did you see the gentleman?

Georges
Yes, monsieur. He didn't write an answer but he asked me to say that he was coming here to see you.

Jacques
Ah?....when?

Georges
Now, monsieur.

Jacques
What, you mean right away?

Georges
Yes monsieur. He asked if you were at home. I said I thought you were. Then he said he was coming.

Jacques
(Pause)
All right...When he rings, ask him to go into the salon.

Georges
Yes Monsieur.
(Exits)

Colette
Are you expecting someone?

Jacques
Yes. I hope you'll forgive me, Colette. It's a -- man whom I must see....about a business matter....a rather important one...it concerns my interests in Morocco.

Colette
Why, yes, of course.

Jacques
I wasn't expecting him. Not today at least, otherwise------

Colette
It doesn't matter at all. As a matter of fact, there was very little left for us to say to each other----wasn't there?

Jacques
But----I don't know Colette.

Colette
You see, Jacques, I've only just realized that for the past six months it's I who have given a bit too much both the questions and the answers. So now, I think there's been enough of it and the best thing we can do is put a period at the end of our page. Don't you think so too?

Jacques
.....Just as you please.

Colette
Ah! well------

Jacques
What?

Colette
Oh, nothing: I feared you might have made some protest----

Colette
merely for the sake of appearances! But I see that you've bravely made up your mind - don't even regard it worth while to protest. Splendid! Let me congratulate you on your resignation----
(Pause)
What are you thinking?

Jacques
(Whose mind is on other things)
Why---of you and what you've just said....

Colette
No you weren't.

Jacques
I'm sorry, Colette. As a matter of fact I was worrying a bit about this coming interview. Do forgive me. Can't we meet again some time soon --- perhaps tomorrow?

Colette
What for?

Jacques
I'd like to explain----to attempt to make my position clear.

Colette
What for? I assure you, my dear, that I've understood you perfectly!
(She tries not to cry, but one tear escapes which she wipes off)

Jacques
(Going toward her)
Colette-----

Colette
Pay no attention to me! ---There, it's over. And now let's say goodbye to each other sweetly like the two good friends that we are. I shall miss you, Jacques dear!

Jacques
Come, Colette-----

Colette
Yes, I will. It's not your fault; --- you're the sort of man one misses. After all, we have some rather pleasant memories to look back upon, haven't we?

Jacques
Yes, dear....delightful memories.

Colette
Even if, as you say, they're not really memories of love---

Colette
I shan't discard them for that reason. You see Jacques----- when a woman promises to love you, it is not always wise to believe her. Nor must you always believe it when she promises not to!

Jacques
My dear Colette!..

Colette
Come, we mustn't weaken now!

Jacques
But at least, you'll let me write, won't you?

Colette
Do! Write me a letter filled with sweetly melancholy reflections on the way all things come to an end and sent it by the florist with a few of those big dahlias that I like. I'll wait until they're quite faded before trying to put you out of my thoughts. Goodbye.
(She gives him her hand. He kisses it. She walks toward door upstage. The bell is heard)

Jacques
Wait a moment, won't you?
(He opens door a bit, listens, then opens it wide as GEORGES enters. To Georges)
Is it the gentleman?

Georges
Yes monsieur.

Jacques
Very well.
(GEORGES exits. JACQUES stands aside to let pass COLETTE, who nods to him as she passes. She turns front when she reaches door)

Colette
(Moved)
The dahlias ----you won't forget.....
(She goes and he with her. JACQUES re-enters a few seconds later and goes to door right and opens it)

Jacques
(Talking off)
Would you mind coming in here, Monsieur.
(JACQUES moves a little away from door. AIGUINES enters, stops a moment, then goes to Jacques with outstretched hand)

Aiguines

How are you, old man?

Jacques

Why, it's----

Aiguines

Of course it is! Didn't you know you were writing to me?

Jacques

Why no, - otherwise ----

Aiguines

Otherwise you wouldn't have been so formal, I hope. But didn't my name mean anything to you?

Jacques

Of course. But I was led to believe that the Aiguines I had to deal with was somewhat older.

Aiguines

Somewhat older? Why?

Jacques

Well, it doesn't matter. I remember you had some cousins. I thought perhaps it might be one of them.

Aiguines

Ah?....But what's the reason for-----

Jacques

I'll tell you.
(Pause)
Do sit down!

Aiguines

You're looking at me? .... You find I've changed, eh?.....
....I'm sure you'd hardly have recognized me?

Jacques

Yes.....I would have.

Aiguines

Good Lord, it's something like twenty years since we've seen each other. Not since the days when we wore our trousers out sitting on the same bench at school. Happy days! Twenty years leave their mark! On some people at least.... But you've hardly changed. I'm very glad to see you again, old boy.

Jacques

Thanks.

Aiguines

It's strange we shouldn't have met. Of course I haven't been in France much. What have you been doing? Weren't you in Morocco for a time?

Jacques

Yes.

Aiguines

Who was it told me so?....Ah yes, I remember; it was Sicard, ---you remember him---fat Sicard? I met him one day in Madrid. We were staying at the same hotel. He had just returned from Africa I think and had seen you there.

Jacques

Yes.

Aiguines

And now you're living here all the time?

Jacques

All the time, - yes.

Aiguines

Damn funny thing, life. You really didn't know that the Aiguines you were writing to for an appointment was I?

Jacques

No.

Aiguines

Well, the minute I saw your signature I didn't hesitate. That's why I came here right away. If Jacques Virieu wanted to see me I certainly couldn't keep him waiting!

Jacques

(Pause)
Is that the only reason you came here right away?

Aiguines

(Surprised)
....Good Lord! Since I haven't the least idea what you have to say to me-----

Jacques

You haven't the least idea?

Aiguines

Why, of course not, - no.

Jacques

Ah.....?

Aiguines
Well, look here, you begin to pique my curiosity! Upon my word you sit there looking like a judge! Come, old fellow, what's it all about?

Jacques
Whom is it all about, might be more appropriate.

Aiguines
Whom?....All right, if you prefer it. Well, then, whom is it all about?

Jacques
(Pause)
About Irene de Montcel.

Aiguines
(Amazed and annoyed)
Irene de Montcel?

Jacques
Yes.
(Pause)
You seem to begin to understand!

Aiguines
No. What can you have to say to me about Mlle. de Montcel?

Jacques
You can't guess?

Aiguines
No, I can't!

Jacques
I'm a distant cousin of hers. But what's more important is that I've been a friend of hers for a long time. One of her best friends, --- I might even say her best friend, if you wish.

Aiguines
Well?

Jacques
You knew that, didn't you?

Aiguines
I didn't even know you were acquainted.

Jacques
Have you never heard her speak of me?

Aiguines
Never.

Jacques
She hasn't even spoken of the -- role that someone was playing for her at the prest time?

Aiguines
What role?

Jacques
Don't you know that someone is pretending to Irene's father to be her fiance, or something of the sort?

Aiguines
Her fiance?

Jacques
To ward off her father's suspicions; and to permit her to remain in Paris, yes.

Aiguines
(Pause)
She asked you to do that?

Jacques
Yes.

Aiguines
Did you do it?

Jacques
Yes.
(Pause)
You knew nothing about all that?

Aiguines
I? Why, of course I didn't!

Jacques
Really! I had somehow imagined that you would have known about it.

Aiguines
What are you driving at?

Jacques
I merely wanted to let you know by what right I say what I shall have to say to you about her.

Aiguines
That's all very well, - but as for me I've no right to listen to what you may have to say about the young lady.
(Rises)

Jacques
Sit down, please.

Aiguines

(Disturbed)
What for? I tell you again that it's something which doesn't concern me.

Jacques

Steady! Otherwise, I'll be forced to think it's something which concerns you deeply.

Aiguines

(Feelingly)
What do you mean?

Jacques

It means that a suspicion I had before your arrival has become a conviction in the last five minutes.

Aiguines

All right, - keep your suspicions to yourself, and let me get out of here!

Jacques

(Standing between door and Aiguines)
I swear to you that you'll listen to me!

Aiguines

Good God! Are you crazy?

Jacques

No.

Aiguines

You insist that I listen to you.

Jacques

Yes.

Aiguines

You're wrong, I tell you!

Jacques

We'll see as to that.

Aiguines

Very well, I've warned you. Do as you like.....

Jacques

I shan't take long, don't worry. If - contrary to what I think - what I have to say doesn't apply to you, at least you'll know to whom it should be repeated. When a man occupies in a girl's life the place which the person I'm referring to occupies in Irene's life - when he makes her do or lets her do - it amounts to the same thing - what she

Jacques

has done in order not to be separated from him - he has no valid excuse, none, do you hear, for not marrying her. That is to say, if he's free. If he isn't, then he must take steps to become so at no matter what cost and at the earliest possible moment. Now you have it.

Aiguines

(Pause)
Is that all?

Jacques

Just about. For I shouldn't like to think that the person in question were a man without honor. If that were the case then the duty of a friend is clear; to warn Montcel to protect his daughter. But I hope it will not be necessary to go to that extreme.

Aiguines

Are you quite through this time?

Jacques

Yes.

Aiguines

Then listen to me. Unless I'm off my base I must conclude that you believe me to be Mlle. de Montcel's lover or something like it. That's it, isn't it?

Jacques

That is the most likely supposition, yes.....

Aiguines

Well, then look at me and despite the high strung condition you seem to be in , try to see things clearly. I give you my word of honor that you're mistaken. I am not and never have been anything but an acquaintance of hers, do you hear..not even a friend. You can believe me or not, that's your affair. That's all I've got to say. And please understand that if I've taken the trouble of replying to you at all instead of treating you like a lunatic and leaving here without a word, it's solely because of our old friendship.

Jacques

(Impressed by Aiguines' truthful attitude, but despairing)
Then....who is it?

Aiguines

How should I know?.....Has she a lover?

Jacques

Yes.

Aiguines
Did she tell you so?

Jacques
She let me believe it -- which amounts to the same thing.

Aiguines
Not always. You may be too hasty in drawing conclusions.

Jacques
Well, it's the only explanation possible. Besides, if it weren't true, she'd have said so. She couldn't have doubted for a moment that I was convinced of it.

Aiguines
(Pause)
Well,in any case, I'm sorry but I can give you no information. And if you've nothing more to say.....

Jacques
You're not going?

Aiguines
I must. I came as soon as I got your note but I'm leaving Paris in a few days and I've a great deal to do.....

Jacques
Don't go, I beg you! You're the only one who can help me find this man and I must find him.

Aiguines
But since I know nothing----

Jacques
That's not possible! You must have some idea, some suspicion. Seeing her constantly... knowing the sort of life she leads...whom she sees.....

Aiguines
But you're wrong. I don't see her constantly. Once in a while she goes out with us -- but I've much less in common with her than you seem to think ---

Jacques
How can that be? You're almost the only people she ever sees -- she spends all her time at your house. You can't help knowing something!

Aiguines
(Coldly, not looking at Jacques)
I know nothing.

Jacques
I don't believe it!

Aiguines
See here! That's quite enough ---

Jacques
I believed you a moment ago, believed you without having any proof, when you said you were not her lover. You were telling the truth then. Now, you're not, you're lying. You're lying so as not to betray the secret of someone who is probably your friend. That's it, isn't it?

Aiguines
I know nothing.

Jacques
Listen: just tell me that he's a decent chap and that he'll marry her -- and I'll ask you nothing more.

Aiguines
I have nothing to say. I know nothing.

Jacques
But don't you understand that this poor girl must be saved, that she can't be allowed to go more deeply every day into an affair which is ruining her!...And if it were only that! She has already begun to suffer. What's going on between her and that other? Has she felt that he wants to be rid of her. I don't know. But what I do know is that she spends her time locked in her room, sobbing. That's what she has come to!

Aiguines
Oh!.....
(Gesture)

Jacques
That doesn't worry you, eh? Well it does me! I'd give my life, do you hear, my life, to make her happy.

Aiguines
(Looks at him in surprise)
So you love her?

Jacques
...I am her friend.

Aiguines
Come on, answer me. One doesn't do what you have done out of mere friendship, - nor undertake to go through with a thing like this pretended engagement. You love her?

Jacques
Very well, then, I do love her. I've loved her for ten years, and I'll never love anyone else. What of it?

Aiguines
(Goes toward Jacques, puts his hands on his shoulders and looks at him)
You love her? Is that true?

Jacques
Yes!

Aiguines
Then for Christ's sake, get away from here! Get away! It doesn't matter where - as far as you can and stay away as long as you can! Don't come back until you're cured! That's all I can say!

Jacques
What do you mean?

Aiguines
I'm giving you some advice, good advice, that's all.

Jacques
You're going to explain to me exactly what you mean! Aren't you?

Aiguines
(With hesitation)
Why --- there's nothing to explain -- You love this young woman and from what you tell me I gather she loves some one else. That being the case, the best thing to do is clear out. Don't you agree with me?

Jacques
Clear out and leave her in the hands of some rotter, probably. - some rotter who wanted her and so made her believe he'd marry her.

Aiguines
Is she really so simple as that?

Jacques
A woman is always that the first time she's in love. This is her first experience, I have reason to know that. If she were to have loved anyone before this, I'd probably have been the man. I adored her and until last year I lived in the hope that some day she'd be my wife. And she would have been, do you hear, if this other man hadn't appeared. I didn't fight against it, there was no use. But since he's been the means of making me unhappy at least I want him to be the means of making her happy. And to do that I must find him.

Aiguines
....You can do nothing for her.

Jacques
How do you know?

Aiguines
No one can do anything for her.

Jacques
Why?
(AIGUINES remains silent)
Ah! You made a slip there! You're not going to keep on pretending that you don't know how things are! You can't keep silent any longer!

Aiguines
Leave her alone! Don't meddlein this, believe me! And don't ask me anything more!

Jacques
Look here, you don't suppose I'm going to be satisfied with vague warnings that can have only one effect: - making me more anxious than ever! I'm not asking for advice, I'm demanding a name!

Aiguines
(Abruptly)
The name of her lover? She has no lover! Now, are you satisfied?

Jacques
What?

Aiguines
It might be better for her if she had one!

Jacques
I don't understand.

Aiguines
A woman can free herself from a lover - even if he's the worst scoundrel living. She can get over it. Whereas in her case ---

Jacques
In her case, what? Finish!

Aiguines
Hers is quite another kind of bondage...And that kind --
(Gesture)

Jacques
Another kind of bondage?

Aiguines
It is not only a man who can be dangerous to a woman...In some cases it can be another woman. That's all.

Jacques
A woman?

Aiguines
Yes.

Jacques
What are you talking about? You mean to say it's on account of a woman that Irene refused to go with her father to Rome?

Aiguines
Yes.

Jacques
It's on account of a woman that she spends her time crying?

Aiguines
Yes.

Jacques
What kind of a story is this?

Aiguines
The kind of story that often happens -- regardless of what men think. The kind of story that people don't believe for the mos t part, or which makes them smile, half amused and half indulgent.

Jacques
But it's impossible! Irene is much too well balanced.

Aiguines
What does that mean?

Jacques
Are you positive of this?

Aiguines
Yes.

Jacques
Do you -- know this woman?

Aiguines
(Looks at Jacques quickly, observes him intently for an instant)
I know her, yes.

Jacques
(After a moment)
I am dumbfounded ---

Aiguines
And a little relieved...Aren't you?

Jacques
Well, good Lord! After what I had feared!.....

Aiguines
So you'd prefer ---?
(Pause)
Well, you're wrong to prefer it!

Jacques
You'd rather she had a lover?

Aiguines
In your place? Yes! A hundred, a thousand times rather!

Jacques
Are you mad?

Aiguines
It's you who are mad! If she had alover I'd say to you: Patience, my boy, patience and courage. Your cause isn't lost. No man lasts forever in a woman's life. You love her and she'll come back to you if you know how to wait...But in this case I say: Don't wait! There's no use. She'll never return, -- and if ever destiny should cross your paths again fly from her, fly from her..do you hear? Otherwise you are lost! Otherwise you'll spend your existence pursuing a phantom which you can never overtake. One can never overtake them! They are shadows. They must be left to dwell alone among themselves in the kingdom of shadows! Don't go near them...they are a menace! Above all, never try to be anything to them, no matter how little -- that's where the danger lies. For, after all, they have some need of us in their lives..it isn't always easy for a woman to get along. So if a man offers to help her, to share with her what he has, and to give her his name, naturally she accepts. What difference can it make to her? So long as he doesn't exact love, she's not concerned about the rest. Only, can you imagine the existence of a man if he has the misfortune to love - to adore a shadow near whom he lives? Tell me, can you imagine what that's like? Take my word for it, old boy, it's a rotten life! One's used up quickly by that kind of game. One gets old in no time - and at 35, look for yourself, ones hair is gray!

Jacques
Do you mean --- ?

Aiguines

Yes, -and I hope you'll profit by my example. Understand this: they are not for us. They must be shunned, left alone. Don't make my mistake, Don't say, as I said in a situation almost like yours, don't say: "Oh, it's nothing but a sort of ardent f friendship -- an affectionate intimacy...nothing very serious... we know all about that sort of thing." No! We don't know anything about it. We can't begin to know what it is. It's mysterious--terrible! Friendship, yes -- that's the mask. Under cover of friendship a woman can enter any household, whenever and however she pleases -- at any hour of the day -- she can poison and pillage everything before the man whose home she destroys is even aware of what's happening to him. When finally he realizes things it's too late -- he is alone! Alone in the face of a secret alliance of two beings who understand one another because they're alike, because they're of the same sex, because they're of a different planet than he, the stranger, the enemy! Ah! at least if a man tries to steal your woman you can defend yourself, you can fight with him on even terms, you can smash his face in. But in such a case - there's nothing to be done - but get out while you still have strength to do it! And that's what you've got to do!

Jacques

.....Why don't you get out yourself?

Aiguines

Oh, with me it's different. I can't leave her now. We've been married eight years. Where would she go?....Besides it's too late. I couldn't live without her any more. What can I do -- I love her..

(Pause)

You've never seen her?

(JACQUES shakes his head)

You'd understand better if you knew her. She has all the feminine allurements, every one. As soon as one is near her, one feels - how shall I say it - a sort of deep charm. Not only I feel it. Everyone feels it. But I more than the rest because I live near her. I really believe she is the most captivating, harmonious being that has ever breathed...Sometimes when I'm away from her, I have the strength to hate her for all the harm she has done me.. but, with her, I don't struggle. I look at her..I listen to her..I adore her. You see?

Jacques

(Pursuing an idea)

Tell me....why is Irene suffering?

Aiguines

I don't know. You don't suppose I'm confided in, do you? She is suffering probably, as the weak always do, struggling with a stronger nature until they give in.

Jacques

You think Irene is weak?

Aiguines

Compared to the other? Oh, yes.

(Pause)

She is probably still struggling?

Jacques

Ah!

(Pause)

So that's why she is unhappy?

Aiguines

For that reason -- or some other. She has many to choose from.

Jacques

You mean -- ?

Aiguines

Why shouldn't she suffer? I suffer, don't I?

Jacques

That's not the same thing.

Aiguines

You think so, do you? Well, on the contrary, I believe it's very much the same thing. There's only one way to love, you see, and one way to suffer. It's the same formula for everybody - and in that respect she and I have been in the same boat for some time. Only she hasn't got used to it yet - and I have.

Jacques

I don't quite follow you.

Aiguines

Haven't you heard any mention of a cruise?

Jacques

A cruise?

Aiguines

Yes. In the Mediterranean..on a yacht, an American yacht?

Jacques

No.

(Pause)

Is she to be one of the party?

Aiguines

I don't know. That's why I'm asking if she spoke of it.

Jacques
She never speaks to me of anything--and I see her so seldom.

Aiguines
In her place -- I'd refuse to go.

Jacques
You would?

Aiguines
I doubt that she'll be able to. However--that's her affair. ---What matters most is you. What are you going to do? Will you take my advice and go away for a while?

Jacques
I don't know yet. I'll think it over.

Aiguines
Don't wait, old man. Believe me.

Jacques
It's not as dangerous for me as you think. I almost never see her.

Aiguines
What difference does that make? When she needs you, she knows where to find you --- you've seen that for yourself. That is how one can get caught, even after one has been warned. ---Remember what I'm telling you.

Jacques
But where can I go?

Aiguines
Anywhere---so long as it's far away.
(Pause)
Have you still got business interests in Morocco?

Jacques
Yes, but----

Aiguines
Then go back there for a while. At that distance she won't be able to turn to you so easily.

Jacques
Ifyou knew her as well as I do, you'd realize that you're needlessly alarmed. She turned to me for help in a moment of frenzy. But she's much too proud to do so again. Besides, I don't see how I could help her anymore.

Aiguines
How can you tell?
(Pause)

Aiguines
If you don't want to go away, then find a woman that is attractive to you, a real woman, who likes our sort of love. See if she can't make you forget the other one.

Jacques
(After a pause)
I've already tried that.

Aiguines
And it didn't succeed?
(JACQUES shakes his head)
You see my fears were not so exaggerated as you thought. There is nothing for you to do but go away, -- and without a moment's delay. Now it's up to you.
(Bell is heard)
Are you expecting someone?

Jacques
No.

Aiguines
Anyhow, I must be going---Goodbye, Jacques.

Jacques
Thanks.....

Aiguines
Oh!
(Gesture)
If only I could have convinced you!
(GEORGES enters from rear)

Jacques
What is it?

Georges
Mlle. de Montcel would like to know if you can see her.

Jacques
What!

Georges
And I said that I would see if you were in, monsieur.

Jacques
Ask her to wait in the salon, then close the door that gives into the hall.

Georges
Very good, monsieur.

Jacques
It's Mlle. Irene?

Georges

Yes, monsieur.
(Exits)

Jacques

Well, --- this is an unexpected visit!

Aiguines

Tell me --- you've no intention, I hope of repeating a word of what we've said to Mlle. de Montcel, ... have you?

Jacques

Do you suppose she'd ever forgive me for knowing anything about it?

Aiguines

Right! And now -- good luck, old man.
(They shake hands)
Remember -- she can never belong to you no matter how you try. They're not for us. Never. Goodbye.
(He exits and JACQUES accompanies him. Room is empty for a moment, then JACQUES reenters from right door with IRENE)

Irene

You're sure I'm not disturbing y ou?

Jacques

Very sure.

Irene

You'd tell me if I were, wouldn't you?

Jacques

I'd tell you.

Irene

Were you alone?

Jacques

I was - with a friend, but he was leaving when you rang.

Irene

But perhaps you're waiting for someone?

Jacques

No one.

Irene

Then may I stay? It won't bother you?

Jacques

It won't bother me.

Irene

Were you surprised when you heard it was I?

Jacques

A little, yes.

Irene

You wondered what I had come here for, didn't you? You said to yourself: "Is she going to track me down to my very lair now?" Didn't you think that?

Jacques

I thought that no doubt there was something you wanted to talk to me about.

Irene

...There is.

Jacques

Well, I'm listening.

Irene

(Smiling)
Oh, please, not like that. Don't rush me! Don't speak to me like a busy lawyer to his client. Be kind, a bit affectionate! ....Do change that severe look!

Jacques

Why do you say I have a severe look?

Irene

You always have a severe look.

Jacques

You're mistaken-----

Irene

...Be sweet Jacques, won't you? Like old times! I'm in terrible need of your sympathy.

Jacques

Really?

Irene

Why do you say really like that?

Jacques

For no reason. Go on, continue.

Irene

Are you surprised I ask you to be kind...to be affectionate... to me?

Jacques

I've stopped being surprised by you, my dear ---

Irene
Don't be cruel!....I've given you the right to be, I don't forget that! But just the same I hope you won't be, do you mind? Not today, anyway.
(She turns her face away to hide tears)

Jacques
(More gently)
What's the matter?

Irene
Nothing---pay no attention.

Jacques
Don't you want to sit down?

Irene
Thanks.

Jacques
Will you excuse me a second? I want to tell Georges that I'm out if any one comes---- Would you like some tea?

Irene
No thanks.

(He exits a moment, then re-enters)

Irene
Jacques, I want you to tell me something.

Jacques
What?

Irene
Since I asked you to .. since you agreed to play this part to my father, - have you no longer as much affection for me?

Jacques
Why do you ask me that?

Irene
Because I must know.

Jacques
I have as much affection, only ---

Irene
Only?

Jacques
The affection has altered. Before, I admired you. Now, I pity you.

Irene
(Pensive, without looking at him)
And you despise me?

Jacques
I pity you.

Irene
You're right ... I am to be pitied, you'll never know how much ----
(Pause)
But I can still count on you as a friend, can't I?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
I need to believe that, to feel sure of it. You don't know, you see Jacques, how much you mean to me.

Jacques
As much as that?

Irene
Please, no sarcasm. You say you pity me. Then prove it.

Jacques
How?

Irene
Oh! ... By showing me a little tenderness and being a little lenient, that's all.

Jacques
Aren't you happy?

Irene
Happy?

Jacques
Yes.

Irene
There are times when I wish I were dead.

Jacques
Well, that <u>is</u> a way out, but ---

Irene
You don't believe me?

Jacques
I hope you're exaggerating; - if one had to kill one-self every time he was unhappy ---

Irene
Oh! I'm not thinking of killing myself. It needs courage to die like that. And I haven't even any courage left.... I have nothing left.....

Jacques
You do seem quite done in, Irene. Yet, you get what you wanted. You had to stay in Paris at any cost. Well, here you are ---- Oh, talking of that, I meant to tell you that I must write to your father.

Irene
To father?

Jacques
Yes. It was understood that the present state of things shouldn't go on too long after his departure, don't you remember?

Irene
Yes, - well?

Jacques
Then, too, he insisted that I let him know as soon as possible what my intentions were and I promised to do it. He's already been gone a month a nd I haven't written yet... It's time I did.

Irene
Must you?

Jacques
I'll tell him that the business matters that were worrying me at the time of his departure, are now in such bad shape, that I'm in no position to make plans for the future.. Does that seem all right to you?

Irene
Just as you wish.

Jacques
I'll add that I am going to live in Morocco in order to attend directly to my interests there.

Irene
But it isn't true, is it --- you're not going away?

Jacques
Yes, probably.

Irene
Oh!
(Pause)

Irene
But why? Is it really because of business matters?

Jacques
No.

Irene
Well then? ... Oh! You're not going alone?

Jacques
What do you mean, not alone?

Irene
...Is someone g ing wi th you?

Jacques
No, nobody.

Irene
Then why must you go?

Jacques
I need a change. This climate's not agreeing wi th me.
(Pause)
I should have gone long ago -- a year ago when you came back from Italy. Perhaps I'd have been better by now.

Irene
...It's because of me that you're going.

Jacques
Good Lord!

Irene
Is it true?

Jacques
Don't you think it's about time that I considered my own peace of mind a little? After all I can't spend my life loving you and beginning to suffer all over again each time I see you.

Irene
Then you still love me, Jacques? Is it true?

Jacques
Does that surprise you?

Irene
After what you must have believed of me lately, I was certain that was over.. that you didn't love me any more. I felt it ---but I hoped it wasn't true.....

Jacques
You hoped it wasn't true?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
You hoped that I still loved you?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
(Pause)
I can't understand you.

Irene
(Looking away from him)
Don't go away Jacques.

Jacques
What do you say?

Irene
Don't go away.

(JACQUES looks at her, stupefied)

Jacques
Ah! yes, yes---I understand.

Irene
What do you understand?

Jacques
You're afraid your father'll send for you when he receives my letter and learns I'm no longer here, eh? He might even come back himself to get you. Is that it? ... Well, I'm sorry, but this time you'll have to manage without me. You can do what you like and how you like, but I shall write to your father tonight.

Irene
(Shrugging her shoulders)
Write all you want to. I don't care!

Jacques
(Sarcastically)
Really!

Irene
Absolutely, I swear to you!

Jacques
Then why do you want me not to go away?

Irene
(Letting down)
Oh! ... for no reason at all.
(She rises)

Jacques
Sit down again and answer me.

Irene
It's no use. Go on, go away -- since you're in such a hurry to forget me! --- Go! ---

Jacques
(After a pause)
Really, Irene, what is this game you're playing now? ... It looks very much as if you were being wickedly coquettish! Do you realize that?

Irene
It's true. Please forgive me. I don't know what I'm saying any more. Oh, Jacques, I'm so miserable!
(She falls into a chair and cries)

Jacques
(Touched, going to her)
What's the matter?

Irene
(Clinging to him)
You mustn't leave me. I'm so alone, so wretched! Jacques! ---Only you can save me!

Jacques
But what do you want me to do?

Irene
Protect me. -- Shield me.

Jacques
Shield you?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
I assure you, Irene, I'm doing my best to understand you, but really---

Irene
I know, I must seem crazy. ----Well, I am crazy! You have got to treat me like a crazy person---a sick person---And

Irene
take care of me, that's all. If you don't come to my rescue right away ---it will be too late!

Jacques
Are you in danger of something?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
An imminent danger?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
Can't you tell me what it is?

Irene
(After hesitating)
...It has to do with a departure, a cruise. And I mustn't go! I don't want to go! If I do, it's all over. I'd be lost! ------

Jacques
What is forcing you to go?

Irene
Ah!
(Gesture)
I am afraid of myself.

Jacques
Then why don't you take a train to Rome with Antoinette to join your father?

Irene
I had thought of that... But at the last minute I wouldn't go,- I wouldn't have the strength---

Jacques
Yes you would! I'll help if you wish.

Irene
(Shaking her head)
Or else I would come back.

Jacques
No!

Irene
You see, there are hours in which I can see clearly, such as

Irene
now, when I can be practical and free to use my own mind... But there are other times when I can't, when I don't know what I'm doing. It's like -- a prison to which I must return captive, despite myself. I am----

Jacques
Fascinated?

Irene
Yes. I need someone to watch me, to hold me back. Someone who has understood or guessed certain things--that I can't talk about, that I can never tell!

Jacques
Is that what you expect of me? How canI tell you, or restrain you from doing what you want to do? Have I the least influence over you? Have you ever listened to my advice? Please remember that it was only a month ago you sent me packing.

Irene
It's no longer the same.

Jacques
What is no longer the same?

Irene
Many things. I will listen to you now. I want to listen to you.

Jacques
But you won't be able to! You won't be allowed to! What weapons have I to fight with? What canI add to what you yourself have already said. You acknowledge that this cruise would be your ruin? What can I add to that? ---
And then do you imagine for one moment that advice from me would hold you back during one of these hours of insensibility you speak of?
(IRENE shakes head)
You see!....And surely you don't expect me to hold you by force do you? So? What can I do for you?

Irene
Everything. You can save me.

Jacques
How?

Irene
You are the only one who can save me---

Jacques
Why?

Irene

Because you love me-----

Jacques

It's for that very reason that I can do nothing. As soom as I saw you miserable I'd be useless. You can't take as your trained nurse a man who loves you!

Irene

...Not as a trained nurse---

Jacques

Well what, then?

Irene

(Not looking at him)

Jacques--would you like me to give myself to you?

Jacques

Irene!

Irene

Would you?

Jacques

Enough! Be still!

Irene

Why?

Jacques

So that's it. --- That's what you've come to offer me?

Irene

(Lowering head)

Yes.

Jacques

My poor Irene.

Irene

You don't want me?

Jacques

But I love you! Don't you understand what that means?

Irene

Of course---

Jacques

(Forcibly)

You offer me your body, your wretched body as a pledge, is that it? You want to soil it with me so that you can tell this woman----

Irene

(With a cry)

Jacques!

Jacques

(Still moved)

Yes, I know! I've guessed it! What of it? I suppose you want to tell her that you've given yourself to a man, so that she'll leave you alone? But as for me, me---it's not your body I want. It's you, all of you, don't you see? Can you give me that---tell me? Can you give that to someone you dont love?----For after all, you don't love me, do you? You don't love me?

Irene

(With despair)

I want so much to love you.

(She bends over and sobs)

Jacques

(Distraught)

Poor child !

Irene

(Through her tears)

You think that I don't know it would mean my happiness? I know only too well that the place where I really belong is here, against your shoulder. Why wont you let me stay there?

Jacques

Oh! Irene---what you are asking is too terrible.

Irene

Why?.... Perhaps I would learn to love you?

Jacques

Afterwards, you mean?------No, my dear....

Irene

But once you told me that I would--.

Jacques

Ah! Because at that time I thought that only your pride stood between us. I didn't know then all that separates us!

Irene

But once you will have cured me!

Jacques

Do you really believe that I could cure you?

Irene
Yes, if you're very kind, very indulgent, if you have a little patience.

Jacques
But, you see, I love you too much for that.

Irene
Then....You refuse me?.....Is that it, Jacques?.....What is going to become of me!

Jacques
What would become of me? I've been hurt a great deal, as it is.

Irene
But that's over, I wont hurt you any more. How could I hurt you when it will be you who have saved me?

Jacques,
That means nothing. You wouldn't do it on purpose, naturally.

Irene
Jacques, look at me. Look in my eyes. I will give you everything a man can expedt from a woman he loves.

Jacques
(Disturbed)
Don't tempt me, Irene. I have dreamed of that moment too long. Be careful.

Irene
Well that moment has arrived..Take me in your arms, I am yours, Jacques, all of me.....

Jacques
You don't realize what you're promising.

Irene
Yes, I do.

Jacques
There is still time...you can still go.

Irene
I am not afraid.

Jacques
You really wish it? Are you sure that you do?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
(Taking her in his arms)
Irene?.....Is it true?.....
(He starts to kiss her on the mouth. As IRENE beholds his face filled with longing, she makes an abrupt movement of repulsion. He lets her go)
You see?

Irene
Yes, yes -- forgive me!
(This time it is she who offers her lips to him. Then, her nerves giving way, she lets her head fall on his shoulder, struggles with herself a moment, then breaks in tears)

Jacques
(In despair)
Irene!

Irene
No, no! -- Pay no attention! --- It doesn't mean anything.... It's all over-----You will keep me?

Jacques
----I'll try.

CURTAIN

THE CAPTIVE

Act Three

August 20, 1926.

Act Three

Scene: Same as Act II.

JACQUES is seated alone, his hands behind his head, smoking and meditating. GEORGES, his man, enters at back, bringing a letter which he gives to Jacques. The latter inspects the envelope and seems surprised.

Jacques

Who brought this letter?

Georges

A maid, monsieur. She is waiting for an answer.

(He walks to back and waits near door. JACQUES opens and reads the letter. After a few moments of thought, he rises, crosses to and sits at his desk, takes a sheet of paper and starts writing)

Jacques

For what time didmadame order the car?

Georges

Three o'clock, monsieur.

(JACQUES looks at time, finishes letter, slips it into an envelope and hands it to Georges)

Jacques

There.

(GEORGES goes. JACQUES again picks up the letter he has received, re-reads it, then carries it to his nose, breathes its perfume and smiles. IRENE appears at door right. Her hat is on and she is ready to go out. She has in her hand a bundle of samples of materials for hangings)

Irene

You didn't tell me which of these samples you preferred. This one, --- that --- or that?

Jacques
It's for your own room. You'd better choose it yourself.

Irene
But I want you to like it.

Jacques
I'll like whichever one you choose.

Irene
Well, at least you might tell me which one you prefer.

Jacques
But I approve your choice in advance ----

Irene
Oh! How annoying of you!

Jacques
Are you going out?

Irene
Yes, I must go to the decorator's, and to the painter's, then at three-thirty, I have an appointment at Proxine's studio to have another look at the little landscape that I liked so much the other day. Don't you want to come?

Jacques
I can't.

Irene
You'll have to see it sometime.

Jacques
What for?

Irene
I'm certainly not going to buy a picture as expensive as that without your having looked at it.

Jacques
You don't need my advice. I don't know anything about painting. If you like the picture, buy it, that's all.

Irene
Can't you really come? I'll pass by here with the car and pick you up. It won't take more than twenty minutes altogether.

Jacques
I can't, I tell you. I'm waiting for someone.

Irene
What?

Jacques
Oh, just --- a caller.

Irene
At what time?

Jacques
At half past three.

Irene
Will the call last long?

Jacques
That, I don't know.
(Telephone rings. He takes up receiver)
Hullo ---- yes ---- who is it, please ---- oh! Just a minute, --
(To Irene)
Praxine wants to speak to you.

Irene
(At telephone)
Hullo --- Oh, hullo, how are you? --- Why of course I haven't forgotten --- at half past three, just as arranged. -- All right? -- what? ---- No, he is so sorry, but he has an appointment and won't be able to come. Yes, see you later.
(She hangs up receiver)
He asked me to be there on time, because he has to leave.
(Pause)
Well then?

Jacques
Well then, what?

Irene
May I really buy the picture if I still like it as much as I did?

Jacques
Why of course.

Irene
You're a darling. But, you know, I really think it's a good buy. Praxine never gets less than 25,000 francs for his smallest canvases and he's giving me this for 15,000 - just because it's I.

Jacques
Well, that's splendid.

Irene
I do so hope you'll like it, but I warn you it's extremely modern. You may think it's horrible ----

Jacques
Of course I won't. What time will you be back?

Irene
Oh, not late. I have to stop and send some books to Antoinette; she writes me she has nothing to read. That's all. I'll be back here for tea.

Jacques
If by any chance the person I'm expecting should be still here when you return, would you mind not coming in?

Irene
No, of course not.

Jacques
I'd rather you didn't meet.

Irene
Oh? Why not?

Jacques
I don't think either you or she would enjoy it much.

Irene
Ah!
(Pause)
Can't you tell me who it is?

Jacques
Does it interest you?

Irene
Well, really! -- After what you've just told me ---

Jacques
It's a very sweet woman, towards whom I have behaved very shabbily.

Irene
(Searching in her mind)
A woman towards whom --- Madame Martel?

Jacques
Exactly.

Irene
No? ---- How funny!

Jacques
Isn't it?

Irene
She's coming to see you?

Jacques
I wrote giving her an appointment. Whether she'll come or not, I don't know.

Irene
But why the appointment?

Jacques
Here.
(He hands her the letter he has just received)

Irene
(After having read it)
What are the letters she mentions?

Jacques
The letters she wrote me while --- that she wrote me last year.

Irene
Hadn't you given them back to her?

Jacques
No. We left Paris in such a hurry a year ago that I didn't have time, and since our return I hadn't given it a thought.

Irene
(Smiling)
Poor woman.

Jacques
You don't mind my receiving her here?

Irene
Why no, of course, not at all.

Jacques
That's what I thought.

Irene
Why should I mind?

Jacques
For no reason, that's true.

Irene
I have perfect confidence in you.

Jacques
Of course!

Irene
I suppose the reason you asked her to come here was because you wanted to give her the letters personally, and you're quite right.

Jacques
Naturally.

Irene
(Looking at him)
What's the matter?

Jacques
Nothing!

Irene
You look annoyed that I should be taking this so agreeably.

Jacques
I? On the contrary, I'm delighted!

Irene
Would you rather have me jealous?

Jacques
I repeat that I'm delighted.

Irene
I have no reason for being jealous, have I?

Jacques
No! Absolutely - none!

Irene
Well then?

Jacques
Jealousy in your case would certainly be a luxury!

Irene
Meaning what?

Jacques
Simply, that just as jealousy's the most natural thing in the world when one's in love, it becomes absurd and meaningless when one isn't, that's all.

Irene
So, - I don't love you?

Jacques
Naturally you don't love me.

Irene
(Shrugging shoulders)
How absurd!

Jacques
What is absurd?

Irene
To say that.

Jacques
Not at all, why is it?

Irene
Come now, what are you reproaching me about?

Jacques
I'm reproaching you about nothing. Nothing at all.

Irene
Have you any fault to find with me?

Jacques
No! Go along and do your errands. Please!

Irene
Let's clear this up. I'd prefer that.

Jacques
What for? It's so useless.

Irene
If I've disappointed you in any way, tell me.

Jacques
In no way.

Irene
Don't I do all that I can to make you happy?

Jacques
All that you can.

Irene
Have I had any other thought than your happiness, since I've been your wife? Has my life had any other purpose? Don't I always ask myself, before doing anything whatsoever, if you'll be pleased and whether you'll approve.

Jacques
Even in choosing your bedroom curtains, - quite right.

Irene
Don't make fun of me, please.

Jacques
I'm not making fun of you. You're an attentive, devoted and faithful wife. What more can I ask? If all that doesn't make me happy, I must be very hard to please!

Irene
(Looking at him)
I don't understand you any more, Jacques.

Jacques
I know it! That's why all this talk can accomplish nothing.

Irene
(Pause)
Then --- then you're not happy?

Jacques
In any case, it's not your fault. I repeat that I have no reproaches to make.

Irene
(Wearily)
But what can I do, then?

Jacques
Nothing. There's nothing to be done.

Irene
Yet you have my every thought. You know that, don't you?

Jacques
No! I don't know that at all!

Irene
You don't?

Jacques
How do you expect me to know what your thoughts are? Besides they're yours those thoughts... they belong to you and they're no business of mine.

Irene
But I hide nothing from you! Nothing that might disturb you, -- I swear it.

Jacques
As to that ---
(Gesture)

Irene
You don't believe me? Well then, question me. I'd much rather have that.

Jacques
Oh! no, no --- No questions! Let's leave in the dark what was made to be in the dark!

Irene
No! Since we've come to this, I want you to question me. --- Perhaps you'll see how unfair you are when you know everything.

Jacques
Then there are things to know?

Irene
Only things that can reassure you.

Jacques
Tell me. I'm listening.
(Pause)
Have you seen her again?

Irene
No.

Jacques
Has she telephoned you?

Irene
No.

Jacques
Written?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
When?

Irene
Shortly after our return to Paris.
(Pause)
Twice.

Jacques
Where are the letters?

Irene
I sent them back unopened.

Jacques
Unopened?

Irene

Word of honor.

Jacques

How did you send them back?

Irene

By the person who brought them.

Jacques

How does it happen that I didn't know about it?

Irene

You weren't in. You had gone out.

Jacques

Both times?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

They were probably waiting for me to leave before bringing them!

Irene

Perhaps. I don't know.

Jacques

Then you've no idea what she wanted of you?

Irene

Oh! --- to see me again, no doubt.

Jacques

What makes you think that?

Irene

I'm just supposing it.

Jacques

Is that all?

Irene

...No.

Jacques

What else?

Irene

A few days after the second letter came her maid spoke to me in the street.

Jacques

Perfect!

Irene

It wasn't -she, who had sent her.

Jacques

(Ironically)

Really.

Irene

No. She was very ill.

Jacques

(Same tone)

Well, well.

Irene

She'd been ill a long time. She had just had a relapse. All that night she'd been delirious. It seems.....that she had called for me several times .... So the maid who's devoted to her, thought it best to come and tell me.

Jacques

And then? What did you do?

Irene

Nothing.

Jacques

Nothing?

Irene

(Shaking her head)

I merely asked the maid to bring me news of her the next day. The next day the news was better. I told the maid not to come back.

Jacques

(Pause)

And then?

Irene

That's all.

Jacques

Absolutely?

Irene

Yes.

Jacques

Why haven't you told me this before?

Irene
I didn't want to worry you unnecessarily. You're so sensitive you'd have been agitated despite anything I could say. I decided to wait a few days and then tell you.

Jacques
Why a few days?

Irene
She's going to Switzerland for several months to convalesce. I wanted her to have gone.

Jacques
Who told you she was going? The maid?

Irene
Yes.
(Pause)
Aren't you a little reassured now?

Jacques
(Looking at her)
I wasn't worried.

Irene
Don't you know you can have confidence in me?

Jacques
But I've always had confidence in you, Irene. I never doubted that when the time came, you would act as you did. You promised when you married me never to see that woman again. I was certain that you never would see her again.

Irene
Then why are you so upset? Why aren't you happy?

Jacques
And you, are you happy?

Irene
I?
(Pause)
Of course I'm happy.

Jacques
Oh! Come now!

Irene
But really, Jacques! .... Haven't I everything to make me happy? We have all we need, we get along so well - you're kindness and generosity itself to me. What more can I wish for?

Jacques
Why do you try to make me believe that nothing is lacking in your life?

Irene
Because it's true!

Jacques
No, it's not true! -- You're not yet 30, and I'm not 35. Happiness, at our age, doesn't consist in leading a comfortable existence ... with bracelets and two cars. It's too soon for that. You long to love, Irene, just as I long to be loved.

Irene
What do you want me to say? You've convinced yourself that I don't love you -----

Jacques
Ah, if you knew how hard it's been to put that into my head, the stupidly hopeful stages I went through before getting it there! I've clung to the substitutes of love desperately -- from tenderness, and friendship to the most pathetic of all - compliance. On a word from you or a gesture that I could interpret in the terms of my desire I'd regain confidence and believe again in the possibility of our happiness. But now those illusions are worn out, they no longer function. I know, that I can really mean nothing to you. I'm as incapable of making you happy as making you unhappy .... Oh, God! if only I could make you suffer!

Irene
You can.

Jacques
How?

Irene
By continuing to say these silly things!

Jacques
You know as well as I that they're not silly. What good is it to shut your eyes? Listen, do you know why I've made an appointment with this woman, a woman who has been my mistress and who loved me?

Irene
Why, Jacques?

Jacques
It was to see the effect it might have on you; whether you would object or seem annoyed ---- It made you laugh. That's the only result I got.

Irene
Did you want me to weep?

Jacques
I wanted to see just how far your indifference went.

Irene
Is it my fault if I believe in your love for me ... if I don't fear your being unfaithful?

Jacques
If you loved me, you would fear it.--- But the truth is, that it wouldn't matter to you in the least.

Irene
That's not so!

Jacques
Oh! yes it is.

Irene
It would hurt me a great deal.

Jacques
Hurt you?

Irene
Of course!

Jacques
And tell me just how it would hurt you?

Irene
How can I tell you that? I don't know.

Jacques
Try to imagine.

Irene
I'd be very disappointed, very saddened --- It seems to me that afterwards I would not like to be taken in your arms again as I did before ... there.

Jacques
(Looking at her mournfully)
As you did before?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
You really like so much to be in my arms? Tell me!

Irene
(Lowering her head)
Why --- yes.

Jacques
My poor child --- so you think that I'm blind?

Irene
(Pause, then with an effort)
Have I --- have I ever refused you?

Jacques
You've had a great deal of courage.

Irene
I thought it made you happy --- that was all I wanted.

Jacques
One can't give happiness so easily as that.

Irene
I'm sorry.

Jacques
Love, you see, --- is something very different from that!

Irene
Everything I could give you - I've given --. If that doesn't suffice you ----

Jacques
No!

Irene
Then, look somewhere else, that's all.

Jacques
You'd like that wouldn't you? What a deliverance for you that day would be!

Irene
Oh! Jacques, that will do!
(Pause)
And anyway.....
(She looks at watch)
--- it's getting late and I must be going.
(She moves toward door)

Jacques
Irene?

Irene
What?

Jacques

Come here.

Irene

What do you want?

Jacques

Forgive me. I didn't mean - to hurt you. If I have, well, I ask you to forgive me.

Irene.

(Going towards him)

Why are you so unjust?

Jacques

Well, you see -- I can't get used to it.

Irene

Used to what? My not loving you? But I do, my dear.... You are everything that I admire, everything that pleases me, everything that I respect in this world!

Jacques

(Dejected)

Yes, it's true, I'm all of that.

Irene

Well, do you think that many wives can say as much of their husbands?

Jacques

(Same tone)

I wasn't asking for as much, either.

Irene

Do I love anyone else but you? I don't, do I? Well then?..... If you had been told a year ago that you held the first and only place in my life, wouldn't you have been happy?

Jacques

Surely ----

Irene

Do you think you've made no gain in my affections since the night I came here, asking you to receive me, to keep me here, by your side? ---- You remember that evening, don't you?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

(Smiling)

And at Montcel, three weeks later, the mayor's speech and

Irene

the little chapel, where it was so cold; you remember that too?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

Do you regret what happened that day?

Jacques

--- Do you?

Irene

(Looking at him)

No.

Jacques

-- That's something anyway.

Irene

Then -- will you kiss me?

Jacques

You want me to?

Irene

Yes,- I do.

(He takes her in his arms and holds her there a moment, quietly, looking at her. At that moment, she notices the little clock on the mantlepiece and leans over to see the time)

What! Is that the time? Is that clock right?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

Quarter to four, already! My watch must be slow! Oh! what a nuisance, I won't even have time to go to the decorator's.

(He lets her go)

Hurry, dearest!

Jacques

Hurry?

Irene

Aren't you going to kiss me?

Jacques

No, you're late already.

Irene
It doesn't matter.

Jacques
No, no -- run along.

Irene
What a dunce! Just because I said.....

Jacques
Go on.... Go ---
(He turns his back to her and walks away)

Irene
Great heavens, but you're touchy!

Jacques
Please go!

Irene
(She sighs, then:)
See you later then?

Jacques
Yes.

(IRENE goes toward door. At the door she turns around)

Irene
I hope you won't make love to that woman?

Jacques
Thank you for thinking of it!

Irene
You promise me you won't?

Jacques
Yes, yes of course.

(IRENE goes out back. JACQUES sits down, thoughtful, a bitter expression on his face. After quite a pause, he sees on the desk the letter Colette had written, takes it, puts it in his pocket, rises, goes and opens a cabinet, and takes out a rather burly envelope, which he brings to the desk and empties its contents: letters. He picks one at random and reads it. At that moment a bell is heard. He puts the letters back in the envelope and puts it in a drawer of the desk. GEORGES enters)

Georges
Madame Martel, monsieur.

Jacques
Ask her to come in.

(A moment later GEORGES ushers COLETTE into the room and retires)

How are you Colette. It was sweet of you to come.
(He kisses her hand)

Colette
Oh! I only came to get my letters. Don't imagine it was for any other reason.

Jacques
I'm imagining nothing at all. But I may thank you for having come, mayn't I?

Colette
Why didn't you give the maid the letters as I asked in my note? It would have been much simpler.

Jacques
I preferred their passing directly from my hands into yours. It seemed to me the safest way. And after all, why not say it: I wanted to see you again.

Colette
Really? And you didn't ask yourself if I wanted to see you?

Jacques
I ventured to think that if that were too disagreeable you wouldn't come.

Colette
I wanted myletters, I've just told you that. You don't seem to realize that I've been waiting for them a year.

Jacques
They were here and I was circling the world. Unless I were to return especially from Japan to get them ---

Colette
You could have sent them to me before you left.

Jacques
I didn't have the time.

Colette
You did go off very hurriedly.

Jacques
Very. But you weren't anxious about your letters, were you? You knew they were in safe-keeping.

Colette
Oh, you think so? And suppose your wife had taken a fancy to search your desk?

Jacques
That's quite unlikely.

Colette
One always believes that. But just the same, such things do happen.

Jacques
Not here.

Colette
Then your wife isn't jealous?

Jacques
Not at all.

Colette
You're lucky. ---- She's not here, I hope.

Jacques
No, she's just gone out.

Colette
That's just as well, too.
(Going to desk, raising picture)
Is this she?

Jacques
That's she.

Colette
My compliments.

Jacques
Thanks.

Colette
Why didn't you tell me the truth the last time I came here?

Jacques
The truth?

Colette
Yes: that you were going to be married. I should have preferred that you know. It would have been nicer. Besides, at least it was a reason.

Jacques
I didn't tell you because I didn't know it myself.

Colette
You didn't know it?

Jacques
No.

Colette
And three weeks later the papers announced that you were married!

Jacques
Yes.

Colette
You didn't lose much time, then?

Jacques
Once a thing like that is decided upon.....

Colette
.. She's a childhood friend, isn't she?

Jacques
She's a cousin.

Colette
First cousin?

Jacques
No.

Colette
Just as well! ---- And you've loved each other always, of course?

Jacques
Well ---

Colette
Oh! You can tell me now. I really don't know why I'm asking you: it matters to me so little.

Jacques
Then -----

Collette
Give me my letters, won't you?

Jacques
Are you in such a hurry to get them?

Colette

Yes.

Jacques

Why?

Colette

Because.

Jacques

I'm not asking you for mine!

Colette

I burned them long ago.

Jacques

Really?

Colette

Oh, anyway, for all the letters you ever sent -- and for all they ever said! ----

Jacques

Just the same, it wasn't very nice to burn them.

Colette

Why should I have kept them?

Jacques

To re-read them now and then.

Colette

I had other things to do.

Jacques

Ah?

Colette

Jacques --- my letters!

Jacques

Not right away! Wait a bit! We've so many things to say to each other first!

Colette

We have absolutely nothing to say. Besides, your wife may come in at any minute, and I don't care to see her any more probably than she to meet me.

Jacques

Sit down. She won't be here for at least an hour. And she won't even come into this room.

Colette

How do you know?

Jacques

I told her I was expecting you.

Colette

You told her that?

Jacques

Yes.

Colette

And she was willing?

Jacques

Of course.

Colette

Well! --- You have trained her properly!

Jacques

Now, do sit down and chat.

Colette

About what?

Jacques

Everything --- everything since last year.

Colette

But I've nothing to tell you.

Jacques

Oh! Come now!

Colette

What do you want to know?

Jacques

Whom are you in love with?

Colette

That, my dear Jacques, if any one should ask you ---

Jacques

What do you care? I promise not to tell a soul. -- Is it --- Moreuil?

Jacques

Seriously? --- Moreuil? -- oh! but he's awful looking!

(He looks at her. She does not falter)

No. You didn't protest. It isn't Moreuil. Then who is it?

Colette

Good Lord, you're the limit!

(She laughs)

Jacques

Ah! you're laughing --- that's nice.

Colette

I'm laughing because you disarm me. But, believe me, I've no desire to.

Jacques

You should laugh. It's very becoming to you. You're lovely when you laugh.

Colette

I don't care to be lovely.

Jacques

What a fib!

Colette

Do you think I care a thing about attracting you now?

Jacques

Oh, I don't say that you care especially about that, - but you'd just as soon I thought you pretty. Well, I find you pretty, very pretty, even prettier than I remembered. Were you as pretty as this before?

Colette

Jacques, please give me my letters and let me go.

Jacques

I'll give them if you tell me whom you're in love with.

Colette

But I'm in love with no one.

Jacques

No one?

Colette

No!

Jacques

Is it true?

Colette

Oh! ..... I'd tell you ..... why not?

Jacques

(Thoughtfully, looking at her)
Colette?.....

Colette

What?

Jacques

If you love no one, won't you --- try to love me a little?

Colette

You? Ah, no, I should think not!

Jacques

Why?

Colette
No thank you! That's all over, fortunately.

Jacques
(Pause)
Too bad ---

Colette
You think so?

Jacques
Yes, it's too bad ..... If you had wanted to love me... just a tiny little bit ..... I could have loved you so much.

Colette
You?

Jacques
Yes.

Colette
You, love? But my poor Jacques, you don't even know what the word means!

Jacques
Do you believe that?

Colette
I know it. For you, love is a rather amusing pastime. It isn't your fault; you were born fickle.

Jacques
I was born faithful, Colette.

Colette
..... Faithful to whom?

Jacques
(Pause)
.... To you, if you wish it.

Colette
And your wife, what about her? Are you already dissatisfied with her? Poor little thing! How I pity her!

Jacques
She isn't to be pitied.

Colette
One year! Not even that, - eleven months! Eleven months ago you married her, and already you're looking for an adventure! ---- Oh, but then I was certain it would wind up like that!

Jacques
Really?

Colette
When I read your note a while ago, I didn't have a moment's doubt. From the way in which you asked me to come, I understood immediately what you wanted.

Jacques
And you came just the same?

Colette
Because of my letters.

Jacques
True enough, --- pardon me!

Colette
But I knew perfectly well that you were thinking much less about returning them to me, than in seeing if I still loved you. I know you Jacques!

Jacques
Not so well.

Colette
Oh! come now, it's so natural. After being kept busy at that long trip, you come back to Paris, and begin getting bored. For a man like you, married life is terribly monotonous, isn't it? So you look around to see with whom you might amuse yourself. At that moment, my letter arrives, just in time for you to remember me. You say to yourself: "Ah, yes good old Colette!..... After all, why not? .... She must be consumed with love for me, the poor thing!" Only, my dear Jacques, you were wrong. Colette no longer loves you! And that's that!

Jacques
(Pause)
Well -- never mind ...

Colette
That surprises you, doesn't it?

Jacques
What?

Colette
That one should be able not to love you.

Jacques
(Sadly)
No, it doesn't, --- it doesn't surprise me in the least, I assure you. It's in the order of things...

Colette

(After a moment)
Well then?

Jacques

Then nothing. I'm going to give you your letters. That's all.

(He goes to desk, takes out the envelope containing the letters and brings it to Colette)
They are all here.

Colette

(Looking at him)
What's the matter?

Jacques

Nothing.

Colette

Why do you look so unhappy, suddenly?

Jacques

Do I?

Colette

You're not going to tell me that I've hurt you?

Jacques

No.

Colette

Then what's troubling you?

Jacques

Nothing, my dear, nothing at all. I'm unhappy because -- because we're going to part and will never see each other again, that's all.

Colette

What do you care?

Jacques

I shall miss you.

Colette

Have you missed me much during the past year?

Jacques

Perhaps ----

Colette

What a story! You would have told me!

Jacques

How?

Colette

You could have written me --- I hadn't forbidden you to.

Jacques

.... That's true.

Colette

Not a line -- not even a post card --- nothing! And still you expect me to love you! You must admit it would be too stupid of me!

Jacques

It's never stupid to love.....

Colette

It is to love you.

Jacques

That's funny!

Colette

What's funny?

Jacques

How little you know me, my dear Colette! You see in me something wholly opposite to what I really am!

Colette

Ah?

Jacques

Really.

Colette

Whose fault is that, then?

Jacques

Oh! It's mine, I realize that.

Colette

If you were capable of love, why did you never show it to me? Why did you always seem to belittle the love I had for you? ---- the day may come, Jacques, when you'll be sorry for that.

Jacques

Be content, my dear, I'm sorry for it already.

Colette
No, not yet. You're still too young. But ---

Jacques
You can't imagine how sorry I am, Colette.....

Colette
Truly?

Jacques
Yes.

Colette
(After a pause, looking at him)
You're without doubt the most incomprehensible man I've ever known! Things happen when one least expects them, with you -- and when it's too late!

Jacques
Are you sure?

Colette
Of what?

Jacques
That it's too late?

Colette
... Of course.

Jacques
Colette.....
(He takes her hand)

Colette
Don't -----

Jacques
Are you sure that way down, way down in you -- there isn't a little flicker -- that might be revived -- by my being very careful, and taking many pains? .... Tell me?

Colette
No! I don't want to!
(She rises)

Jacques
Too bad!

Colette
Where are my letters?

Jacques
On the floor.
(He picks them up)

Colette
Give them to me.

Jacques
Will you do one last thing for me?

Colette
What?

Jacques
Since it's over, since we're going to say goodbye and never see each other again -- let me kiss you.

Colette
You're mad!

Jacques
Please. I'd like, just once, to see your eyes again ----

Colette
My eyes?

Jacques
Yes. Oh, not as they are now, not your everyday eyes. But the old-time eyes, the certain kind of eyes -- the eyes I used to know ----

Colette
The eyes that asked for respite ----

Jacques
(Going toward her)
Yes. I want to see those eyes again, -- just to see them.

Colette
No.

Jacques
After that you can go away. I shan't try to hold you, I promise. Grant me that one happiness.
(He moves to take her in his arms)

Colette
(Resisting)
No, I don't want to!

Jacques
Please, please let me.

Colette
(Imploring)
Let me go!

Jacques
Colette! ------

Colette
Let me go! I implore you! ---- I don't want to ----
(More feebly)
I don't want to. --- I don't wa-----
(Their lips meet. She abandons herself to him. The kiss, a long one, leaves her prostrated, her head thrown back on his shoulder, her eyes closed.)

Jacques
(Looking down at her, in a low voice)
How beautiful!

Colette
(Feebly, without moving)
What's beautiful?

Jacques
---- A woman!

Colette
(Getting away from him)
I suppose you're happy now? You've had what you wanted? I was almost consoled, I had almost forgotten you ... And I had to come here to give you the satisfaction of torturing me all over again! .... I don't know what I'm going to do..... And I knew what was coming! I knew! -----

Jacques
(Smilingly, approaching her)
My sweet Colette....

Colette
Oh! no, no, don't come near me, Jacques, please! You wanted to know if you still had your power over me! Now that you've seen that you have, it ought to satisfy you.

Jacques
Do you really believe that that satisfies me?

Colette
You don't want to hurt me all over again, do you?

Jacques
No, Colette.

Colette
Then give me my letters and let me go!

Jacques
No.

Colette
You won't give them to me?

Jacques
I'll bring them myself to your house.

Colette
No!

Jacques
In a little while.

Colette
You will not.

Jacques
Will you be there at about five?

Colette
No, I will not be there!

Jacques
(Tenderly)
Yes, you will.

Colette
But I don't want you to come!

Jacques
(Taking her by the arm and forcing her to look at him)
You don't want me to?

Colette
(With less conviction)
No------

Jacques
Truly? You don't want me to?

Colette
(In a supplicating tone)
No!

Jacques
Colette! ----

Colette
Oh!....It's going to begin all over again.....

Jacques
What is?

Colette
Everything, as it was before.

Jacques
Not as before.

Colette
Oh!

Jacques
You'll see!

Colette
It will be just the same, I know.

Jacques
No.

Colette
Why? What's been changed?

Jacques
Me.

Colette
Do you believe people change?

Jacques
They live...and learn.

Colette
(Smiling)
While traveling?

Jacques
Yes, while traveling.

Colette
What does one learn?

Jacques
To love the people of one's homeland, the people who speak one's language. It's tiresome to talk when one isn't understood. One wearies of it.

Colette
(Surprised, looking at him)
Poor Jacques!

Jacques
Don't pity me; I've come back to the land of my own people.

Colette
(Leaning against him; tenderly)
Oh! Jacques ---- it's terrifying! I already loved you when you were quite detestable; what will it be like if you start being a darling?

Jacques
You'll love me a little more , that's all.

Colette
(Nestling against him)
My dear one...I'm happy.....

(The slam of a door is heard. JACQUES listens in surprise. They separate.)

Colette
What is it?

Jacques
Probably my wife returning.

Colette
(Nervously)
Ah! I knew it!

Jacques
Don't worry, she won't come in.
(They listen a few seconds in silence)
You see? Does that reassure you? You can go without meeting a soul.

Colette
(Very moved)
But --- you're going to come?

Jacques
Of course I'm going to come!

Colette
Till you do, my love!

Jacques
(Kissing the hand she holds out to him)
Till I do, my love!
(He opens the door. She goes out, he following her. A few seconds later he re-enters followed by GEORGES)

Georges
Madame asked me to let her know as soon as you were alone, monsieur.

Jacques
(Annoyed)
Well....go and tell madame..... Then bring my hat and my overcoat.

Georges
Yes, monsieur.
(He goes out. A moment later IRENE enters from door left)

Jacques
Back already?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
You weren't gone very long. Well -- what about the painting?

Irene
What painting?

Jacques
Praxine's painting, -- the one you wanted to buy.

Irene
Oh! yes.

Jacques
Didn't you bring it back with you?

Irene
No...Jacques, I'd like to talk with you.. May I?
(GEORGES enters from rear door with Jacques' hat and coat)
Oh? Are you going out?

Jacques
Yes, but I have a few minutes to spare.
(To Georges)
Put them there.
(GEORGES puts hat and coat on a chair and goes)
What did you want to tell me?

Irene
I'll wait until you come back.

Jacques
Please don't.

Irene
I'd delay you.

(He looks at her and is struck by her dazed appearance)

Jacques
What's the matter with you?

Irene
Nothing. I'll tell you when you get back.

Jacques
No. Tell me right away!

Irene
It's not so pressing.

Jacques
Oh, come, tell me - what is it?

Irene
....Jacques, I'd like to go away -- to leave Paris.

Jacques
Leave Paris?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
But what for?

Irene
--I'm just asking you to.

Jacques
What does it mean? Where do you want to go?

Irene
We might go for a while to Montcel, if you want to. Father would be only too happy. He suggested it several times. All we need do is wire the superintendent. He'd wait for us at Limoges with a car.

Jacques
But why do you want to leave Paris? We've hardly been back a month!

Irene
I know.

Jacques
Why this whim?

Irene
It's not a whim.

Jacques
Explain yourself, then.

Irene
I hoped-- that you'd understand.

Jacques
That I'd understand?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
No, I don't understand.

Irene
I mustn't --- remain here.

Jacques
(Forcibly)
But why not?

Irene
(Trembling all over, her head lowered)
I saw her again.

Jacques
Ah? -
(Pause)
Where?

Irene
Praxine's ... She knew I was to be there. She was waiting for me.

Jacques
How did she find out?

Irene
She knows everything.

Jacques
Then she knows Praxine?

Irene
She had met him once, in Vienna.

Jacques
Did you know that?

Irene
No, of course not.

Jacques
So -- you spoke to her?

Irene
She spoke to me.

Jacques
In front of Praxine?

Irene
No.

Jacques
What did she say to you?

Irene
Oh! - I don't remember now.

Jacques
You don't want to tell me --

Irene
Really, I don't remember --- I was hardly listening.

Jacques
She asked to see you again, I suppose?

Irene
....Yes.

Jacques
What did you say?

Irene
...That I didn't want to.

Jacques
And then?

Irene
She said -- that she would wait.

Jacques
Until when?

Irene
...Until I came.

Jacques
Isn't she going to Switzerland?
(IRENE shakes her head)
Or is she cured?

Irene
She says she doesn't care if she dies.

Jacques
Don't worry, she won't die. That's the old story.

Irene
She never lies.

Jacques
Can't her husband take her away?

Irene
They're not together any more. She has left him.

Jacques
Really?

Irene
(After a pause)
Jacques -- is it true that he came to see you a year ago?

Jacques
...Yes. How did she know that?

Irene
She didn't tell me.
(Pause)
It was after that, that she left him.

Jacques
So much the better for him. Is there no one with her who could take her away?

Irene
(Shaking her head)
No one.
(Controlling her feeling)
She is alone -- all alone --

Jacques
(After looking at her a while in silence)
Ah! She's very strong, - one must admit that!
(IRENE shrugs her shoulders)

Jacques
Mustn't she be strong to be able to upset you like this at your first encounter?

Irene
How do you know that she wasn't more upset than I!

Jacques
Of course, that was part of the staging! What surprises me though, is that seeing you in this condition, she should have let you escape, that she didn't attempt to hold you ---

Irene
Do you think -- that she didn't try?

Jacques
Well then?

Irene
To get away, I had to promise that I'd go to see her later.

Jacques
Ah! Splendid! And -- do you intend to go -- do you?

Irene
You know very well I don't.

Jacques
Have you the courage not to?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
It will be hard, won't it?

Irene
Yes.

Jacques
How long --- will you be able to resist?

Irene
I don't know. That's why I'm asking to go away.

Jacques
Yes. Well, go! Who's preventing you? You don't need me for that, do you?

Irene
You won't come?

Jacques

No.

Irene

Why?

Jacques

You want to know why? Look at yourself! Look at your face!... your lost eyes, your trembling hands, -- because you saw her again! .. For a year I've been living with a statue, - and that woman had only to reappear for the statue to come to life, to become a human being capable of suffering and trembling! Well, I give up, Irene, do you understand? I give up. I've loved you more than anything in the world, you know that. I've proved it to you. As long as I hoped that some day you might love me as I loved you, as a man and woman can love each other, with body and soul, I accepted the role of your guardian. But now, I've had enough. I resign from a useless and ungrateful task. Protect yourself, if you can. It doesn't interest me any longer. It's over. I'm tired of chasing a phantom. Aiguines knew what he was talking about when he said: "Leave her alone. Get out of her way. She isn't for you. They are not for us." He was right! .... Fortunately there are women who <u>are</u> for us!

Irene

Mme Martel, for example?

Jacques

Yes.

Irene

---This is my reward for having struggled so hard!

Jacques

I didn't ask you to. It was you who came to me.

Irene

Then you should have turned me down at once!

Jacques

You shouldn't have said that you could love me.

Irene

How should I know? -- I tried my best to love you! -- You always speak of what <u>you</u> have done! What about me? -- What about <u>me</u>? -- What about my feelings - did you ever know anything about them? Did you ever give them so much as a thought? -- You loved me, it's true, but in your way.

Jacques

I'm sorry, but I don't know any other. Were you expecting platonic love from me?

Irene

I expected a little more tenderness. Is there no spirit in love? - Is it all only, endlessly, - <u>the body</u>!

Jacques

Yes, you loathed that, didn't you? -- Go on, say it, be frank at least!

(IRENE lowers her head, and does not answer)

But don't bother, don't say it! What for? I've known it for a long time.

Irene

(Without looking at him)

Have you?

Jacques

You wouldn't have thought so, is that what you mean? Well, you can rejoice, you are rid of it now. I'll never impose my desires again. You can breathe freely at last! No more drudgery. It's over! Aren't you going to thank me?

Irene

(After a moment)

Haven't you anything else to say to me, Jacques?

Jacques

No, really, I haven't. I think we've said all there is to say! Everything is quite clear, now. You can do what you like --

(He takes his hat and coat)

I don't care. Good night!

(He goes out. She follows him with her eyes, and stays there several moments, a hard look on her face, waiting perhaps for him to come back. Then she sits down, deep in thought, her forehead resting in her hand. JOSEPHINE, the maid, enters from door right, carrying some flowers wrapped in paper.)

Irene

What is it?

Josephine

Some flowers for you, madame, that have just come.

(She gives the package to IRENE who uncovers them. It is a large bunch of violets, like those in the first act)

Irene
(After looking at the flowers in silence)
Who brought them?

Josephine
The florist, madame.

Irene
Ah? -
(Pause)
Was no letter with them?

Josephine
No, madame, nothing at all.

Irene
That's all, Josephine, thank you.

(JOSEPHINE goes out. IRENE continues looking at violets. Slowly her eyes fill with tears. She brings the flowers to her face, brushes them lightly with her lips, and holds them to her cheek. Her eyes become fixed and hard, then turn toward the door through which Jacques went out. She looks at the flowers again, seems to hesitate, then rises abruptly, and goes out door right, leaving the door open behind her. This scene should be interpreted freely to obtain the desired effect. IRENE acts with the violets like a snake that is fascinated by some hypnotic force.

The room remains empty a few moments, then the rear door opens and JACQUES appears. He stops at the threshold looking for Irene, then closes the door as he enters. He slowly takes off his hat and coat and sits down at his desk, meditating. At that moment the outer door of the apartment is heard to close. JACQUES raises his head and calls, gently)

Jacques
Irene ? ....
(He rises, goes to door right and calls again)
Irene ? ...
(He goes into room, then re-enters, looking surprised, and crosses to ring bell.
GEORGES enters)
Has madame gone out?

Georges
Yes, monsieur, just a moment ago.

Jacques
Oh!
(Pause)
Did she leave any message?

Georges
No, monsieur.

Jacques
(After a pause)
All right, Georges, you can go.
(He sits down)

(GEORGES goes toward rear door, then seeing hat and overcoat on chair, turns)

Georges
Shall I take these away, monsieur?

(JACQUES, absorbed in his thoughts, does not hear him. In a few moments, he raises his head and notices Georges standing there)

Jacques
What do you want?

Georges
I was asking monsieur, if I should put his hat and coat away?

Jacques
(After a pause)
No.
(Rising)
Give them to me --- I'm going out, too.
(GEORGES helps him put on coat as the CURTAIN FALLS.)

End of Act III.